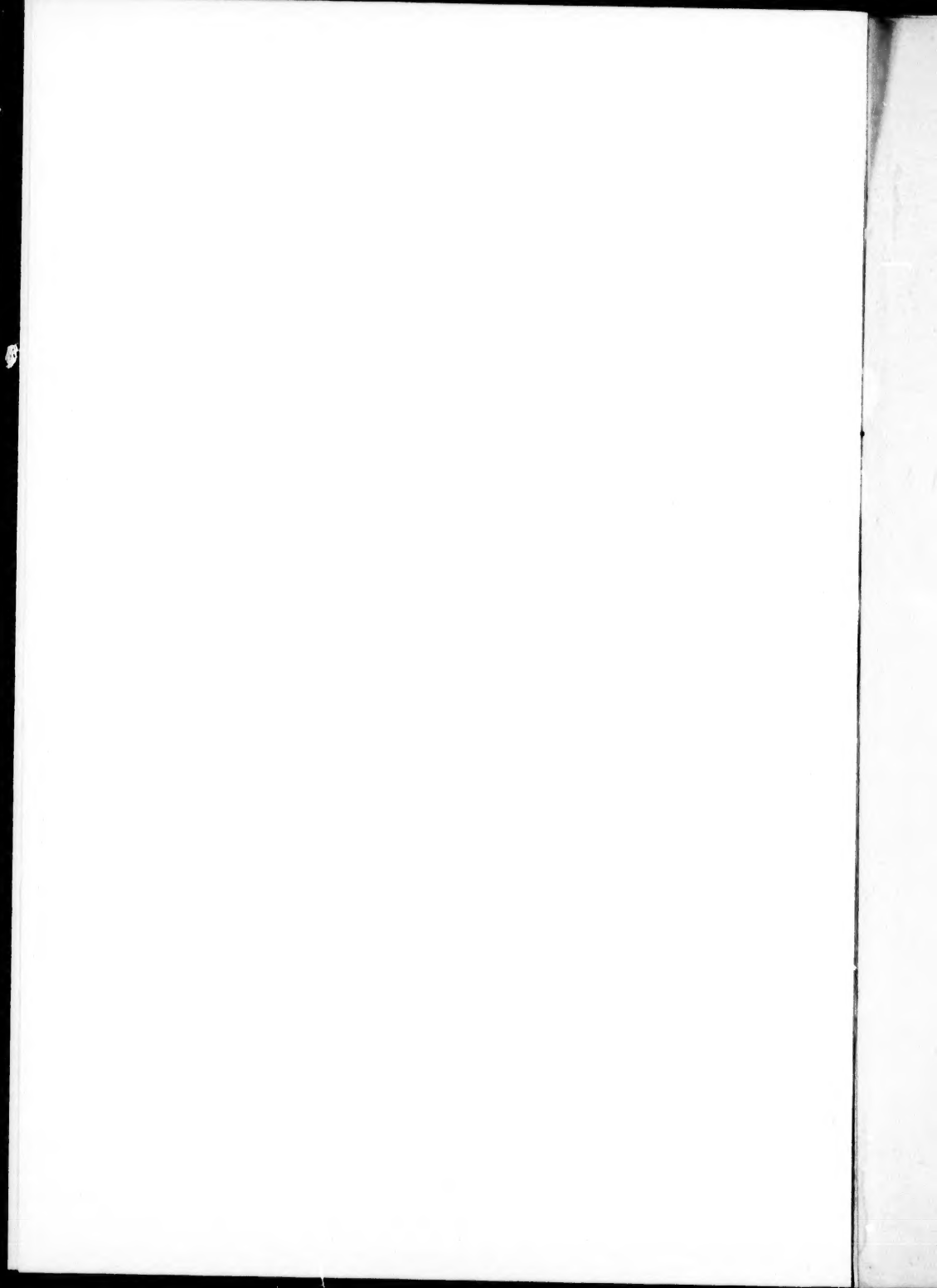




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IN KLONDIKE**

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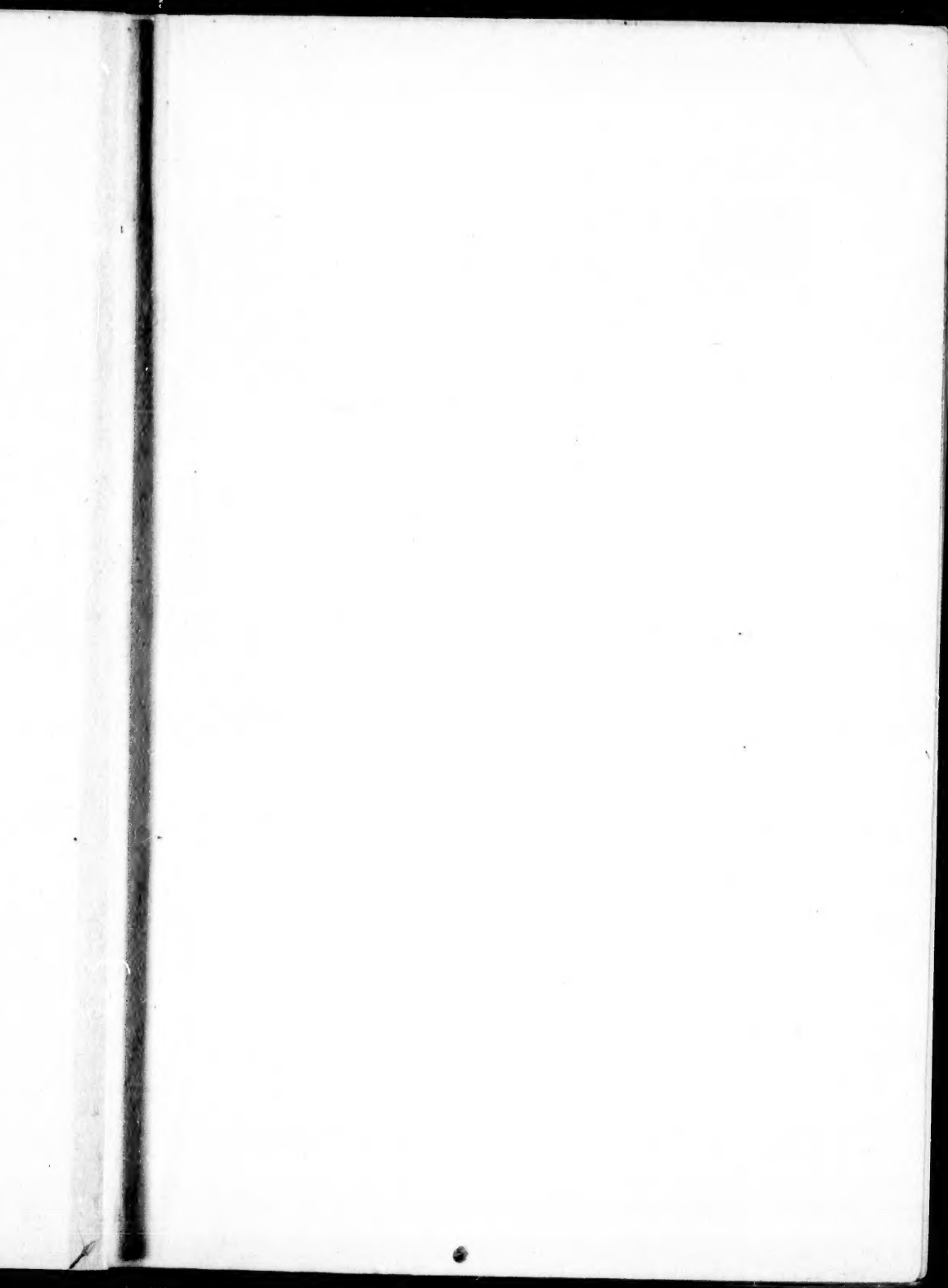
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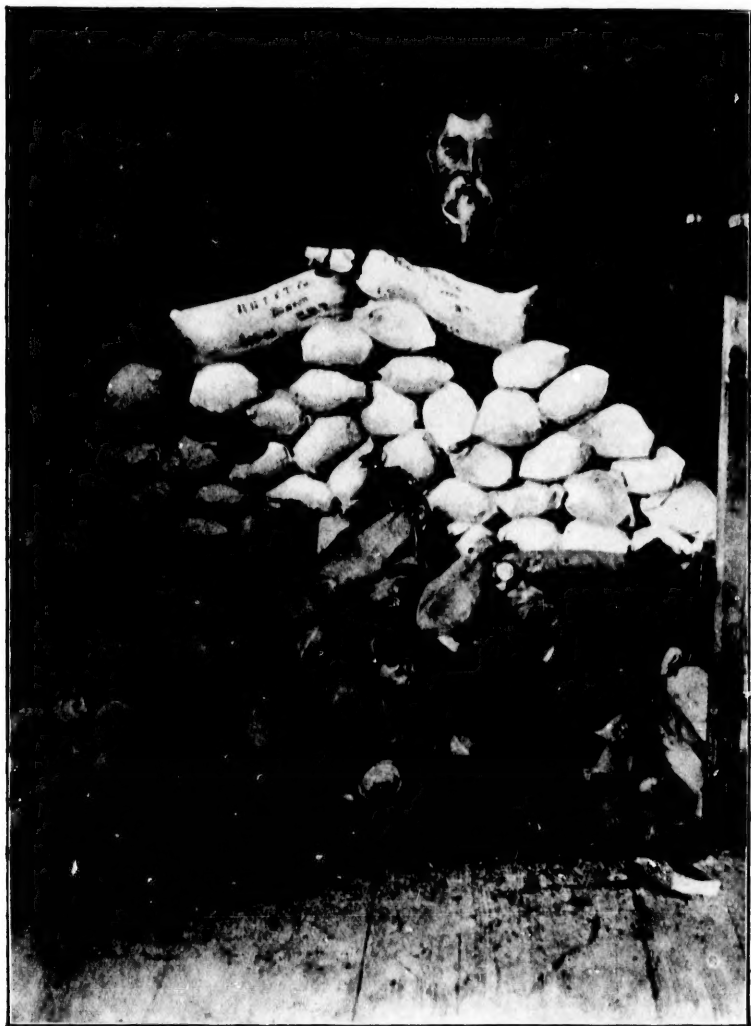
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HALF A MILLION IN GOLD DUST READY FOR SHIPMENT

TWELVE MONTHS IN KLONDIKE

BY

ROBERT C. KIRK

*WITH ONE HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS
AND A MAP*



LONDON
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INDIANS PADDLING A CANOE

CHAPTER I

Arrival of a Steamer in San Francisco bearing the News of the Discovery of Gold in the Klondike—The beginning of the Excitement—Newspaper Stories—The Gold Fever—Stampedes towards the North—Departure of the *Excelsior*, the *Willamette*, and other Steamers—The Two Routes to the Klondike—Through the Inland Passage to Alaska—Captain Holmes of the *Willamette*—Police Committees—Juneau—Alaska Coast Indians—Punishment of a Thief—Completing the Sea Voyage in Lynn Canal—Death of Captain Holmes. .

SAN FRANCISCO was enjoying the peaceful days of a Californian summer. The streets were thronged with people ; trade was being carried on in the usual humdrum manner, and there was nothing to disturb the peace and quiet of the great Metropolis. Steamers were entering and leaving the harbour, attracting

2 TWELVE MONTHS IN KLONDIKE

nothing more than passing notice, and the bay was alive with ferry boats, screeching tenders, and great winged ships fresh from the sea.

Presently, on the morning of July 14 (1897), a thin line of black smoke was seen far out on the ocean, trailing behind a straight black funnel, that gradually changed into the form of an ocean steamer, frail and small, with two sailless masts, and dirty, dingy upper works. The little vessel—the *Excelsior*—finally steamed through the Golden Gate and into the harbour of San Francisco, bearing news that would awaken the busy city and startle the civilised world—news of the discovery of gold in frozen placers up towards the icy confines of the Arctic.

The gold miners who were passengers on the steamer had brought sacks of the precious metal with them, the result of their winter's work, and the dust and nuggets were soon exhibited in windows in the main street of the city, a circumstance that had a great deal to do with inflaming hundreds of men with a desire to hasten to the new El Dorado to dig fortunes for themselves from the frozen gravels. The newspapers published stories of the fabulous wealth of the Northern gold mines, and the word Klondike, unheard of a few days before, was met with on every hand. The newspaper stories were telegraphed across the United States and to Europe, and in many cities of both continents men caught the gold fever and were anxious to join in the rush towards the Arctic.

The excitement grew by leaps and bounds, and the

attention of the world was drawn to a section of the map with which it had previously been quite unfamiliar. Men were flocking to the Coast cities under the impetus of the continued publication of stories of wealth, individual experiences of successful miners, and comparisons of the Klondike with the placer gold countries of America. The gold fever had become epidemic, and evidences of the mania echoed from every part of the globe.

At the time the *Excelsior* arrived in San Francisco there was keen rivalry between the newspapers of the city, and it so happened that two of these papers were intimately connected with two of the great dailies of New York City, also rivals. One of the San Francisco papers gave an immense amount of space on the following day to stories of the miners and other Klondike news, telegraphing the gist of it to its colleague in New York. The rival New York sheet, realising that it had been bested somewhat, sent telegrams of inquiry to San Francisco, and asked for Klondike copy. Then both the San Francisco and New York journals vied with one another in publishing great quantities of similar matter, an example that was followed by every live newspaper in the United States and Europe with a zeal and energy corresponding with the individual ability of each to pay telegraph tolls.

But the circumstance of the rivalry of the New York and San Francisco papers was responsible to a large extent for the great prominence given to Klondike matter in nearly every other paper in America and

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Europe, and, had it not been for this, the Klondike might not have attracted so much attention as it did. In corroboration of this I might cite the fact that news of the gold strike in the Klondike had been received in several American cities prior to the arrival of the *Excelsior*, and one of these letters was published in a newspaper in Seattle (Washington), exciting little comment at the time; nor, until the Metropolitan papers published the news brought by the men on the *Excelsior*, and illustrated the matter with largely imaginative sketches, did the world turn its attention to the gold-fields of the North.

The miners who had reached San Francisco were not in the least averse to giving information concerning the mines, their location, and the routes that led to them, and the newspapers were soon filled with maps and descriptions of the mountain trails across Chilcoot Pass, and the ocean and river route by way of St. Michael's. Then there was other matter concerning the clothing and provisions that each man could take, and also columns of conflicting advice from the returned miners.

The St. Michael's route included a long sea voyage across the North Pacific Ocean, through the chain of islands forming the Aleutian Group, to St. Michael's, a small settlement located on an island about ninety miles from the mouth of the Yukon River. River steamers would come across from the mouth of the Yukon when the sea was calm, and take passengers and a cargo of freight back across the river bars at the mouth of the Yukon, and then begin the tedious

journey of 1800 miles across Alaska, past Circle City, into Canadian territory, and on to the Klondike.

The other route followed along the west coast of the United States and Canada to a point where, ninety miles North of Juneau, one of the older mining towns,



THE TOWN OF DYEA

was an Indian camp known as Dyea. From there a trail led across Chilcoot Pass, described at that time as being cold and bleak and difficult to ascend, to a chain of lakes that formed the headwaters of one of the branches of the Yukon river. It was then a comparatively easy matter to cross these lakes and float with the rapid current to the Klondike. The objections to both routes lay in the fact that the season had so far advanced that it was scarcely possible for any great number of men to reach the gold-fields before winter set in,

6 TWELVE MONTHS IN KLONDIKE

Mushroom steamship companies were organised almost in a night, and the managers lost little time in advertising the sailings of their chartered steamers. The offices of these companies were thronged with crowds of curious people anxious to secure tickets for the voyage up the coast, and asking all sorts of questions, which the agents themselves were wholly unable to answer. So little was known of the region in which the Klondike was situated, and so difficult was it for these agents to reply to the hundreds of questions asked by would-be Klondikers concerning the dress and life of the miners, the amount of food they should take with them, what sort of climate they could expect, and what chances they had of staking out good claims, that the agents were forced to refer the questioners to the few returned miners there were then in San Francisco, and the apartments occupied in the different hotels by these men were crowded with eager groups of men and women from morning until night.

One of the returned miners afterwards told me that the questions that were asked by these people were often ludicrous in the extreme; but they served to illustrate very well the existing lack of information concerning the Klondike country in particular, and the Yukon country in general. One of his questioners was an Irishwoman, with an air of thrift and petty business about her, who asked in all earnestness if her boys and girls, whom she intended taking to the Klondike with her, could attend school in the daytime and dig gold in the mornings and evenings. Another questioner was a dancing-master, who felt that he was

called to the bleak and dreary North to teach the miners and Indians how to dance, and, incidentally, he suggested that he might dig nuggets from the frozen gravel during his spare hours in summer ; he thought it would be too cold in winter for him to venture outside the cabin.

While these newly-organised companies were getting steamers into commission to compete with the Pacific Coast Steamship Company, the only company operating vessels on the Alaskan Coast at that time, the Alaska Commercial Company hastily overhauled the little *Excelsior*, and announced that she would proceed direct to St. Michael's, where they believed prompt connections could be made with the river boats, enabling the *Excelsior's* passengers to reach Dawson, the trading-post for the Klondike region, before the ice would block the Yukon. The number of passengers that the *Excelsior* could carry was necessarily limited, and all the tickets were sold within a few hours after they were placed on sale. The demand was great, and there would have been little difficulty in selling berths for a hundred times her passenger list. The company was thoroughly reliable, and the men who had been fortunate enough to secure passage on the *Excelsior* were reasonably certain that they would reach the Klondike that autumn. When all the tickets were gone, those that had been sold were at a premium, and the men who were unable to purchase brought considerable influence to bear on members of the company to induce them to extend the list, a thing the company was unwilling to do, because it could

8 TWELVE MONTHS IN KLONDIKE

not guarantee passage on the river steamers from St. Michael's to Dawson.

When the *Excelsior* pulled away from the wharf the docks and streets in the vicinity of her berth were a seething, surging mass of humanity eager to get a glimpse of the departing gold-seekers. Relatives and



MINERS BOUND FOR KLONDIKE

friends of the adventurous men who had taken passage on the little steamer crowded to the railings, weeping and waving handkerchiefs to the travellers, who, they thought, would never return from the frozen North. The demonstration at that time was one never to be forgotten, and some of the more enthusiastic friends of the departing ones even followed the steamer in tenders as she sped down the bay and out through the Golden Gate.

The *Excelsior* reached St. Michael's Island in a reasonable time, but the river steamers that the passengers had expected to meet were not there. There was a freight boat at the island, but it had no passenger accommodation, and there was also a steamer belonging to the North American Transportation and Trading Company, the rival of the Alaska Commercial Company. The passengers were in doubt as to whether they should engage passages on the rival boat or take the chance of waiting for the regular steamer. Many of them took the rival steamer, while others waited ; but the few who finally reached Dawson were the ones who had begun the journey up the Yukon River on the rival steamer, and who, after many changes to other steamers when their original carrier stuck on a sand-bar, and after poling a considerable distance in small boats, completed the journey to Dawson on the steamer *P. B. Weare*. Scarcely ten per cent. of the *Excelsior's* passengers reached Dawson, and this number was composed almost entirely of newspaper and mining men, among whom were John D. McGilivray and Max Newberry, correspondent and artist respectively of the *New York Herald*, who had changed steamers four times and poled a boat with Indians for sixty miles in a determined effort to fulfil the mission that had been entrusted to them.

The companies who were sending steamers up the coast from San Francisco were getting them away at the rate of three and four a week, and although many of these vessels were of considerable size, the passenger lists were nearly always full. The scenes at the docks

when the steamers were about to move away were similar to those witnessed at the time of the departure of the *Excelsior*, and there seemed to be no abatement of the excitement.

The steamer *Willammette*, ordinarily a coal carrier, was pressed into the service by the Pacific Coast Steamship Company, and carpenters were put to work building long rows of rough wooden berths for the first-class passengers on the lower decks, where a few hours previously tons and tons of coal—coal that was not white—had been stowed. The dust and dirt had settled everywhere, but no one had had time to sweep it out. In this great steamer about two hundred passengers, myself and two companions among the number, made themselves as comfortable as possible with the crude accommodation, and, when sixty horses and mules and several hundred tons of freight were taken aboard, the steamer drew away from the dock, and, amid the usual demonstrations from the crowds on the wharf, steamed out through the Golden Gate bound for Dyce, but with the intention of receiving additional passengers and freight at Seattle, Washington.

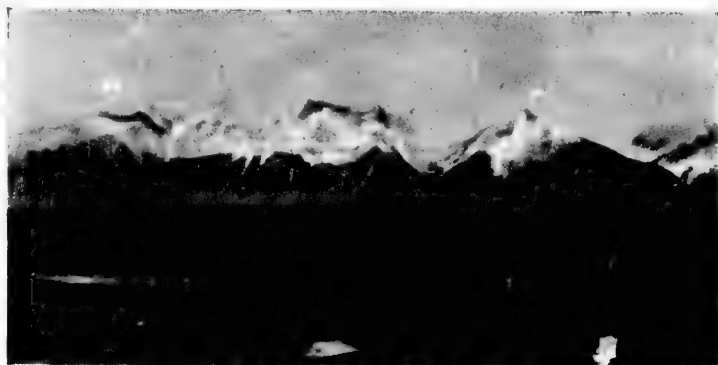
On the afternoon of the first day after leaving port (August 1) an accident happened to the steamer's engines when there was a heavy swell running, so that the vessel rolled threateningly in the trough of the sea. The horses and mules, which had been housed in temporary quarters lashed to the forward deck, were thrown about so violently that they all sustained injuries, my own mules among the others: one had a

broken leg. At this juncture a passing steamer sighted us, and, believing we were in distress, swerved from her course and came within hailing distance, but it was deemed unnecessary for her to stand by, so she proceeded. In a few hours we started again, only to break down a second time, but after that there was no serious trouble.

The *Willammette* reached Seattle on August 4, and found great crowds of people waiting to meet her on the wharves. The passenger list had been so increased in this little city that there was scarcely room for another man, and when all the passengers and horses and freight were aboard, there was hardly standing room. Our passengers were then more than eight hundred, and there were three hundred head of pack animals. The steamer's hold was filled with merchandise, and her decks were piled high with bales of hay and other freight. The *Willammette* cleared from Seattle five days after she arrived, and a few hours afterwards passed through the channel between Vancouver Island and the mainland, and entered what is known as the inland passage to Alaska.

Captain Holmes of the *Willammette* was a veteran navigator, who had sailed the seas all his life and had never lost a ship. This voyage to Alaska was to be his last. He had passed the allotted three score years and ten, and he had determined to bring his active sea life to a close when the *Willammette* returned from the Alaskan coast. Age, together with years of active life at sea, had told on his physical strength, and the constant worry that disaster might befall him before this

last voyage was over, and he would lose the honourable record he had spent a lifetime in winning, bore upon him so that he was threatened with complete prostration. The ship that a few days before had been a coal-carrier had been suddenly transformed into a passenger steamer, crowded with people, filled with freight, and the decks piled high with hay and straw and other inflammable material. The course of the vessel lay for



THE ALASKAN COAST

almost a thousand miles through a channel that wound in and out between hundreds of islands, across dangerous shoals, and over patches of open sea. The captain had never before been in these waters, and, although there were two Alaskan pilots aboard to assist in following the tortuous channel, he felt keenly the great responsibility that rested upon him—a responsibility involving the lives of nine hundred passengers and the great ship.

The steamer was insufficiently manned, and there

were no officers to preserve order. Realising the difficulty of properly handling so large a body of men, many of whom represented the rougher element, and the necessity of guarding against the constant danger from fire, Captain Holmes considered it prudent to appoint a committee of twelve passengers to organise both fire and police patrol to guard against fire and thieves. This was done, and a committee set apart two sections of the ship, one near the forecastle, and the other aft, where the decks and bulwarks were iron, for the benefit of those who smoked tobacco. The men on either the police or fire patrol, who walked the decks in relief squads both day and night, were empowered to order away those who were smoking near the piles of hay, or near the open hatches, down which could be seen horses and cattle in primitive stalls strewn with hay.

The scenes aboard the steamer, as she ran her tortuous course between the beautiful heavily wooded islands, are difficult to describe. There were men from nearly every Western State, and representing almost every calling in the long lists of professions and trades. The greater number, I believe, were men who had held positions involving manual labour, and had given them up and taken years of savings to pay for their passage on the steamer and to buy sufficient outfits of clothing and provisions to carry them through an Arctic winter. There were men from the Washington ranches, miners from Montana, steamboat men from Puget Sound, and clerks and tradesmen and labourers from the different Pacific Coast States and

cities ; and there were half a dozen women, who were determined to go with their husbands to the land of gold. The passengers were nearly all strangers to each other when they embarked, but as the steamer neared the end of its voyage friendships were formed, and little groups banded together agreeing to work in unison for protection while they were crossing the mountain passes.

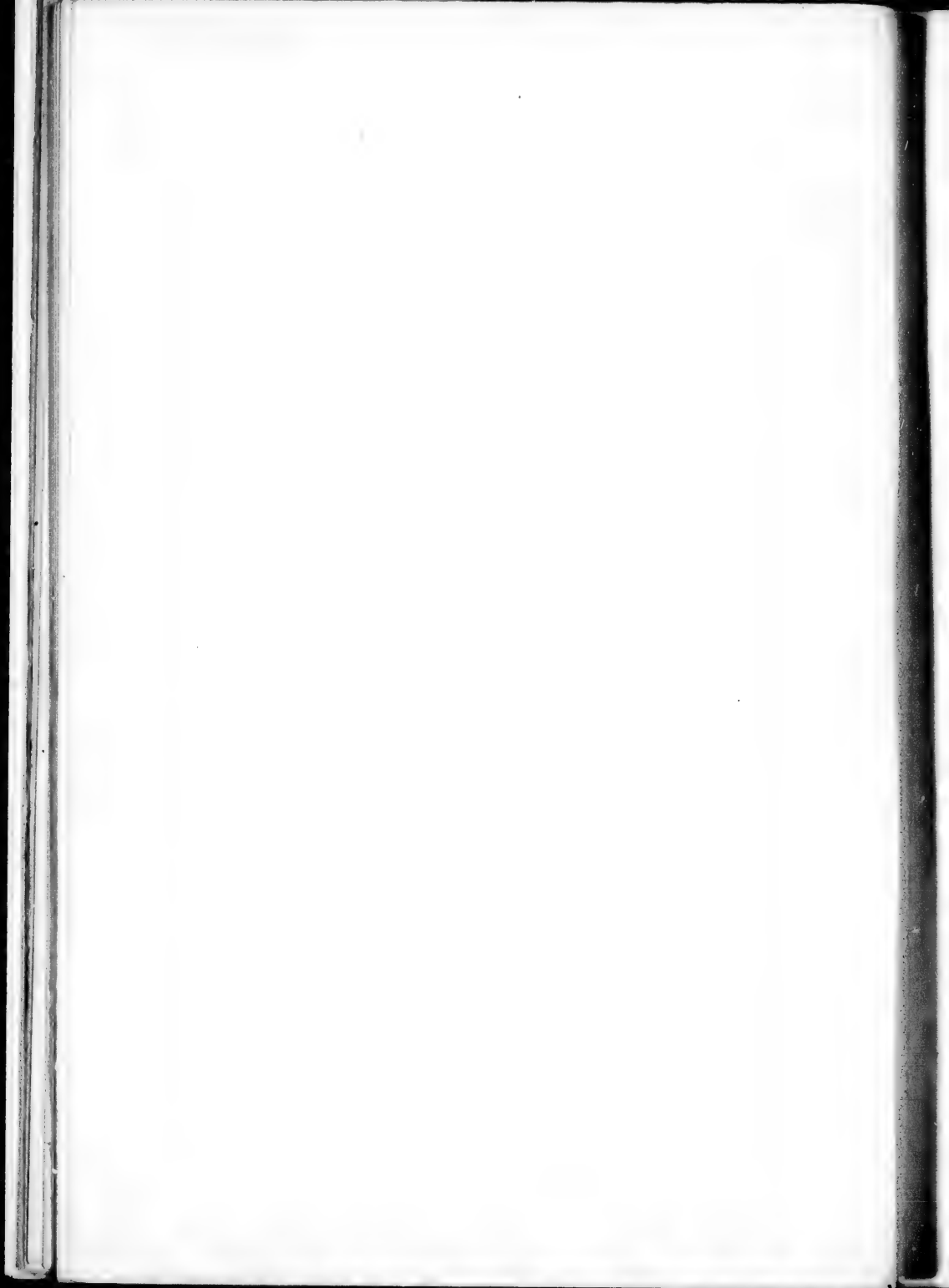
The deck of the steamer presented a curious sight. Over the stalls that had been built for horses were piled so many bales of hay that the forward view was shut off, except from the bridge where the officers stood. On the after-decks hundreds of men were lounging lazily about, already telling their new-found friends of the comfortable homes they had left. Some of the adventurers, who had affected the Wild West garb, were laboriously trying to appear as typical frontiersmen, and others were grouped about the deck discussing the organisation of a vigilance committee, whose duties would be to deal summarily with thieves whom they expected to encounter on the mountain trails. Others were reading the newspapers that told all about the placers of the North ; and back near the stern of the vessel was a little group of Washington ranchers intently examining the wares offered by a cheap pedlar and the "cure-all" remedies of a doctor—a species hard to escape. In the cabin and away down in the depths of the steamer's holds could be seen card games of all descriptions ; and the alleged "frontiersmen" could always be found, in case of an emergency, among these little groups. There was a phonograph

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ALASKAN MOUNTAIN SCENERY



on deck, from which one could hear the last echoes of the civilisation he was leaving.

The steamer crept past glacier-topped mountains, steep-sided picturesque islands where the timber and the vegetable growth are kept continually fresh and green by the excessively damp atmosphere through which the sun shines only after long, irregular intervals.



THE ALASKAN COAST

The journey up the Alaskan Coast is noted for its wild beauty, and in summer-time excursions are run to Sitka, the Alaskan capital, and to the Muir glacier. We passed the village of New Metlakatla, where Father Duncan, known throughout the North, resides with the Indians whom he has educated and civilised. Father Duncan went to this locality many years ago and succeeded, by his wonderful personality and magnetism, in partially educating the men and women of a tribe of Indians, and instilling into them the principles of

Christianity. Years afterwards he had difficulties with the Church, which insisted on changes in certain lines of his teachings, so he and all his Indians deserted their little village and moved farther up the coast into Alaskan territory, where they built churches and schools and homes and called the place New Metlakatla.

Our vessel did not touch at Sitka, and soon after we passed the channel that leads up towards it we came in sight of Juneau, which is picturesquely situated on a flat at the base of a great mountain, whose perpendicular bluffs seem to crowd the little settlement into the sea. Behind the town a waggon-road leads up a narrow canyon into Silver Bow Basin, a mining camp, and across the water on Douglas Island can be seen the Treadwell and Mexican gold-mines, the former of which has one of the largest stamp-mills in the world. These mines support the town, which ordinarily has considerable business activity, and this trade has always been more or less augmented by the traffic to the placer mines on the Yukon River. The climate of Juneau is typical of the Alaskan Coast—moist and rainy—and one seldom gets a glimpse of the sun. The annual rainfall at Juneau and all along the north coast is enormous.

The Alaska Indians have tents and settlements all down the coast, but they dwell in greater numbers at Sitka and Juneau, where they have humble log-cabins with heavy moss-grown roofs, resulting from the excessively moist climate, and in front of which are the curiously carved totem poles.

The oddly-shaped canoes in which the Indians travel

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along the coast and ascend the rivers are made by hollowing out a log, and long journeys are frequently taken into the interior to secure the largest logs that can be found for these canoes.

After burning out the centre of the log the Indians cut and trim the sides and bottom of the craft with a sharp steel instrument, and when this is done it is filled with water, which is afterwards heated with hot stones so that the sides may be bulged out and the

beam, or width, of the boat considerably increased. When the canoe is finished it is stained black



ALASKAN MOUNTAIN SCENERY

on the outside, and decorated with red trimmings and figures, and when the paddles are shaped and a sail is made the craft is ready for a voyage of perhaps a hundred miles along the coast, or up some little river on a hunting or fishing trip. The Alaskan Indian women usually blacken their faces with a preparation made from the soot of burnt cedar-wood mixed with grease, for protection against the burning sun-glare from melting snows and water-surfaces. The black paint for the canoes is made in the same way, and the red paint for canoe and cabin decorations is made from a mineral red—probably red oxide of iron—rubbed in grease.

Juneau was alive with dance-halls and saloons and other things that would suggest a certain mining-camp prosperity, and the Klondikers, nearly all of whom went ashore, soon mingled with the natives of the town, and crowded the streets in front of the shops of the Yukon outfitters. The streets were narrow and paved with planks; and Indian squaws could be seen sitting at the different corners selling beaded moccasins and blue-berries fresh from the mountain sides. There were men in Juneau who had crossed the Chilcoot Pass many times, and there were a few who had been over the summit of White Pass, where a trail had been blazed from the sea to Lake Bennett; and it was interesting at that time to note the enthusiasm of the White Pass men for the new trail which they recommended us to take.

We were eager listeners to all they deigned to tell us, for we realised that the success or failure of our effort

to reach the gold-field might lie in the choice between these two trails. Among the first of these learned men whom we encountered was a man who solemnly vowed that the White Pass Trail was merely a succession of easy grades and flat surfaces, and that a permanent way had been blazed clear across to the lakes. Horses and mules could be used to great advantage on this trail, and he strongly advised every one to take this route in preference to the Chilcoot Pass, because, he said, horses could only be used for a few miles on the latter trail, the summit of which could not be ascended without extreme difficulty. This man succeeded in firmly convincing nearly every passenger on the *Willamette* that the Skagway Trail was something extremely modern in its make-up, and many of them acted on his advice.

Then we encountered the man from Chilcoot. This gentleman spoke of the Skagway Trail as a continuation of steep ascents and descents, the monotony of which was broken only by a succession of bottomless bogs where horses were continually sinking out of sight, and the men who were endeavouring to take supplies across the trail were the pictures of despair and misery. The trail, according to him, had been blazed only half the distance to the summit, and no one but an experienced mountaineer could ever hope to find his way across the divide and through the wilderness of swamps and bogs to the head lakes. The description of the Skagway Trail usually wound up with a burst of profanity that one shudders to recollect. The Chilcoot route, on the other hand, was

practically easy to cross, and men were experiencing little difficulty in getting their supplies to Lake Linderman.

In this exasperating, serious quandary the passengers sought out other men who had had experience of the two trails, only to find that half of them recommended the Skagway Trail and condemned the Chilcoot, while the others recommended Chilcoot and condemned Skagway. The passengers were unable to



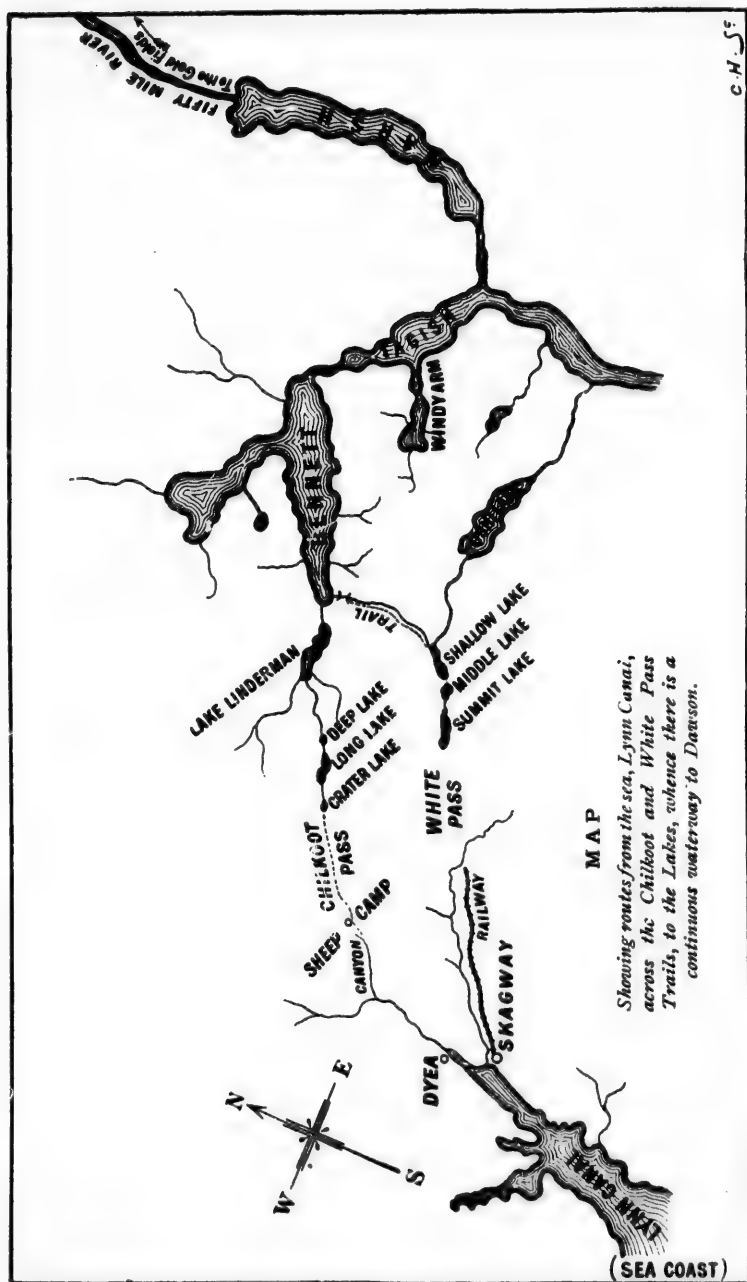
WRANGEL ON THE SKAGWAY ROUTE

determine which route they would select when the steamer finished the remaining ninety miles of her voyage, and they re-embarked at Juneau in a greater state of perplexity than when they went ashore.

The steamer headed down the channel, past great cakes of blue glacier-ice that had been left on the sandbars and flats by the receding tide, round Douglas Island and into Lynn Canal, a beautiful sheet of water that lay crowded in between massive mountains covered with perpetual snow-fields and serpentine glaciers.

While the passengers were going about the shops of Juneau, a thief among their number stole a revolver of considerable value, and the shopkeeper, who afterwards got a description of the man, followed him to the steamer and came aboard just as the vessel drew away from the docks. Afterwards the shopkeeper lodged a complaint with the police-committee on the steamer against the culprit and a trial ensued on the after deck, which resulted in the man confessing his theft. After considerable deliberation the committee decided that as a punishment the prisoner should be sent back to the United States and that he should not be allowed to continue over the mountain trails towards the gold-fields. Accordingly, when the good ship *Willamette* returned to Seattle, ten days later, the thief was her only passenger.

Several months after the *Willamette* was safely docked in San Francisco and Captain Holmes had finished his active career at sea, he was taken sick through nervous prostration resulting from the strain of his last voyage. Fever seized him, and in his delirium he fancied that he stood on the bridge of the *Willamette* giving orders to the men to keep her clear from the rocky coast ; and in one of these deliriums he came to his death. The last voyage was over.





CANADIAN CUSTOMS OFFICE

CHAPTER II

Arrival of Steamer in Lynn Canal—Description of Skagway—Unloading Freight on the Beach—The Valleys leading to the Two Mountain Trails—The Journey across the Skagway Trail, over White Pass Summit to Lake Bennett—Scenes on the Trail—Growth of the Town of Skagway—The Chilcoot Pass Route—The Indians at Dyea—The Journey across Chilcoot Pass to Lake Linderman—Scenes on the Trail—Indian Packers—The Summit—The Incessant Rains—The Glacier Accident—Death in the Trail of a Snow Slide—The Tramway over Chilcoot Pass and the Railway over White Pass.

THE steamer followed her course among the rugged mountains of Lynn Canal until the attention of the passengers was called by the first mate to a row of tents erected on a beach immediately ahead of the steamer.

"There be Skagway," said the mate, "and over there on the flat is Dyea. You will soon be ashore, and

24 TWELVE MONTHS IN KLONDIKE

you can take your choice—Chilcoot or White Pass—and I guess from all accounts they're both bad enough."

The tents that constituted the thriving town of Skagway, sixteen days old, occupied the flat of a little



THE FIRST ROAD CLEARED THROUGH THE FOREST

valley that had crept cautiously down from the rugged mountains to rest by the sea. The tents were very few, and so straggling that one could get no idea of where the streets were going to be laid out. In the distance, behind the town, could be seen the head of the little valley, which, as we afterwards learned, formed the first step in the approach to White Pass. A rushing little river ran through the valley and leapt into the sea by a neighbouring bluff.

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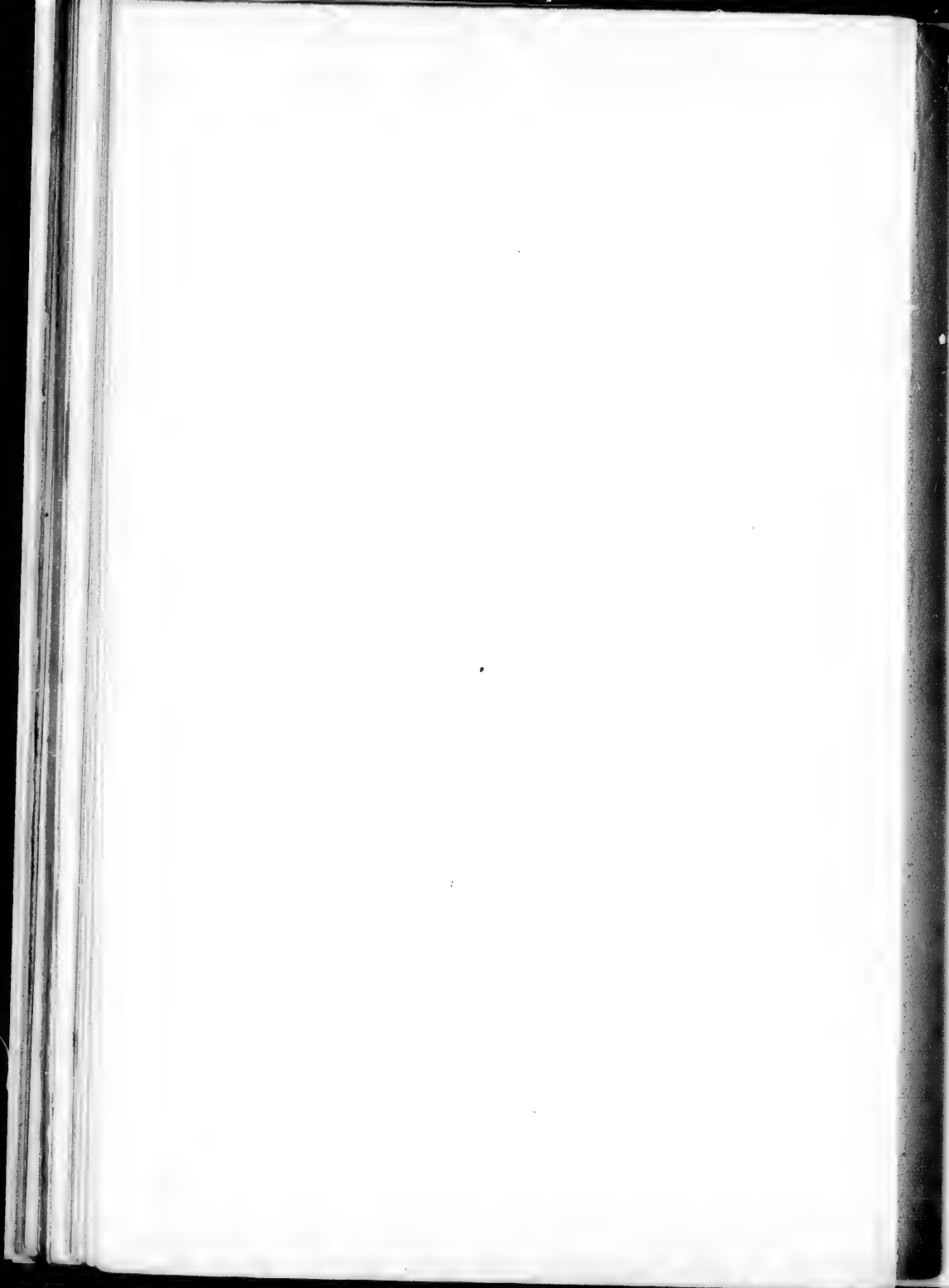
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LANDING FREIGHT AT LOW TIDE ON SKAGWAY BEACH



As the steamer approached the camp, the Indian huts and hovels of Dyea on our left grew more and more distinct, and Indians could be seen descending another turbulent stream in the log canoes peculiar to the Alaskan Coast Indians. Nothing was to be seen of either the mountain summits known as Chilcoot Pass, or the White Pass, but a valley was discernible behind Dyea, as had been seen behind Skagway, and the two little rivers that came from the direction of each mountain, curiously enough, have their heads near the summits of the passes, although they both have branches coming from other directions.

There were no wharves, of course, where our steamer might land, so we dropped anchor, and made arrangements to discharge the cargo of men and horses and provisions on barges that had been previously towed north for the purpose. The tide in Lynn Canal has a rise and fall of twenty-two feet, and this made it necessary for the steamer to remain quite a distance from the shore. When the barges were loaded, they were towed to land at high tide, and when the water receded they were left high and dry on the beach, where men could receive their goods and carry them farther up out of reach of the water.

It would be difficult for one to imagine the confusion that existed when the tons and tons of boxes and sacks and barrels came ashore, where no steamship people were waiting to receive them, and where each one of the eight hundred passengers was hurrying about looking for the goods that bore his private brand. A committee had previously been appointed by the

passengers to superintend the sorting of freight, and to undertake the delivery of the different lots to their rightful owners; but this committee had vanished about the time the steamer dropped anchor, in the



FRAME BUILDINGS IN SKAGWAY

direction of the mountain summits, to choose the best route over which they could carry their goods, and the wildest confusion prevailed among those who were hurrying to get their freights into the tents of Skagway. While these scenes were going on on the beach, dozens of other Klondikers were busy in the town staking building lots, and still others had gone on to examine the trails that led across the mountains to the lakes.

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The little settlement of Skagway was composed of not more than a hundred tents and two or three frame buildings, all of which were erected in more or less confusion, because the first to arrive had more or less difficulty in deciding on the location of the different streets. At that time there was practically only one street, and that was the trail that led from the steamer landing out into the mountains; but late comers, who recognised this road as the main street, laid out parallel streets, and it thus became a common thing to see a lone tent that had been pitched out on the flat, isolated from all the others, but put there to determine and hold some corner lot.

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Along this road were various "shops" and saloons, mostly housed in tents, and up near the place where the town was actually entering the primitive forest was a dance-hall of considerable size, built of logs and boards. Great trees stood near the building, which had been erected so hastily that the settlers had not had time to clear away the forest. The Pack Train saloon, one of the largest tents in the town, was the common meeting-point for the Klondikers, who gathered there at night-time to discuss proposed improvements on the mountain trail. Drinks and cigars were a shilling (twenty-five cents) each, this being the customary price in the rival saloons. Men who had already become disgusted with the trail had placed their tents along the road and opened a shop or store with their wares. A doctor had appeared on the scene, and there were blacksmiths, boat-makers, and carpenters.

The road through the town was crowded at all times with hundreds of men and a few adventurous women, hurrying madly along with all sorts of vehicles and pack animals, carrying their outfits of provisions from the beach to the first *cache*, which was usually kept several

miles out.

There were several wag-gons drawn by one or two horses, two-wheeled carts and sleds dragged over the ground and between the stumps by men and



SLEDDING WITH OXEN

animals. There were many men carrying packs strapped to their shoulders ; strings of horses, mules, and burrows carrying great loads ; and on one or two occasions I even saw slow, lumbering oxen, and dogs of all sizes and colours, slowly picking their way through the swamps and bogs with heavy packs fastened to their backs. The scene on every hand was one of great confusion ; men seemed to be half frantic in their mad desire to hurry their goods over the trail, and things were necessarily in the most unsettled state. With the arrival of each succeeding steamer, bearing hundreds of passengers, the confusion became greater, and this was only finally surmounted by the laying out

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THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL

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of several additional streets along which the travellers might pass. Lawlessness was held somewhat in check by the various miners' committees that had been appointed, and the fear of meeting with summary punishment at the hands of these men probably operated as a restraining check on the evil intentions of thieves and others.

It became necessary for me at that time to journey across the mountain trail to see for myself the conditions and hardships that would have to be encountered if we chose that route, and also to try and sift the truth from the mass of misinformation we had listened to on the ocean steamer. Accordingly I left the vessel at daybreak on the morning after our arrival, and started in the direction of the mountains, carrying with me a camera, a blanket, and three days' provisions.

The course lay at first across a flat, swampy piece of



BUILDING A MOUNTAIN TRAIL

ground, heavily studded with timber, for a distance of four miles : then it left the valley and disappeared into a ravine between two mountains. For some unknown



A DIFFICULT TRAIL

reason the man (Moore) who had originally blazed the trail chose to follow up and down a succession of high mountain ridges in order to approach the White Pass summit, rather than pursue the easier and more natural passage along the banks of the river. After ascending and descending these high ridges for a continuous distance of ten miles, during which there

were many unnecessary descents, the trail re-crossed the same stream that we had followed near Skagway, and

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at an elevation of but a few hundred feet above the sea. The route along these mountain sides and over the different summits was tortuous in the extreme, and the descents were often so great that the course of the trail lay in a series of zigzags. Mud-holes and swamps of moist, black loam were encountered in all the ravines, and the trail among the mountain sides lay among rocks and between boulders of great size. Sometimes we reached altitudes of probably twelve or fifteen hundred feet, and from these places we had fine views of the granite summits around us, mountain torrents beneath us, and the blue spectral glaciers beyond us towards the sea. Sometimes the trail led to the edge of a precipice, sometimes over great areas of glacier-ground rock, and over swamps and through forests where travel was extremely difficult.

When we had passed the bridge crossing the turbulent stream we ascended a zigzag trail over the highest and last mountain before reaching the summit. This was undoubtedly the worst incline of all, and the descent to the stream again, after we had gone along the summit for some distance, was even more steep, and so difficult that a misstep might have meant disaster. Then it became necessary to ford the stream again before ascending the final summit. By this time we had got well out of the large timber, and there were no poles of sufficient size to bridge the stream. A chain of rocks extended diagonally through the water to the opposite bank, and the few men who had preceded us had crossed on these. But this little stream was fed by melting glaciers higher up in the mountains, and in

the afternoon it had twice the volume it had in the early morning before the effect of the sun's rays was felt on the glaciers. The rocks upon which we were to cross were submerged in this seething, roaring mass,



ON THE WHITE PASS TRAIL

but their position could be reasonably well guessed by the surface indications. Since it was important that we should cross, we took off our clothing and made it into a roll, in the centre of which were our cameras, and, with the bundle fastened to our shoulders and a long slender pole in our hands for support, we cautiously forded the stream. The roar of the water was so loud that we could not hear the words of encouragement from those on shore, and the speed

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THE TRAIL AFTER THE FIRST FALL OF SNOW, AUTUMN 1898

of the ice-cold water was such that when it struck us it shot upwards, completely drenching our clothes, but without injuring our cameras.

We dressed on the opposite bank and proceeded over a bald, bare mountain, upon which no trees nor shrubs could grow, until we reached the summit of White Pass. Looking ahead we could see nothing but a great expanse of rock-bound country, but after we had traversed this, we came upon a chain of three lakes, across which the Klondikers who afterwards came with tons and tons of supplies ferried their goods in small boats, thereby saving several miles of rocky trail. Beyond these lakes the trail led over hills and swamps, through forests and past stagnant pools of water, a section that afterwards proved the hardest part of the journey to the worn-out men and horses. The trail ended at the head of Lake Bennett, an estimated distance of forty-five miles from Skagway.

While we were travelling back to the coast we arrived at the ford late one afternoon and found half a dozen Klondikers on the opposite bank who had waited there half a day hoping some one would come from the direction of Lake Bennett and bring the poles across the stream from where we had left them. After the usual preparations we crossed on the submerged rocks as we had done before, and the others were able to proceed. We reached the steamer, which was still busy discharging her cargo, after an absence of four days.

Skagway had grown so during these four days that we could scarcely recognise it. I searched for an

hour for a certain blacksmith's tent where I had left some mule shoes, and finally found that the "street" in which it stood, instead of being the main street as it was when I had been there before, was out in the "suburbs," the town having grown more rapidly in



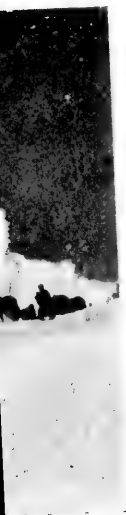
SLEDDING FREIGHT

another section. The streets were filled with a greater number of people, who were hurrying frantically among the stumps and roots that still occupied the roadways, carrying provisions out towards the mountains.

A few facts may be given concerning the marvellous growth of Skagway during the next twelve months. Crowds of people continued to arrive during the summer and autumn, and many who were too late to journey on to Dawson remained there to establish

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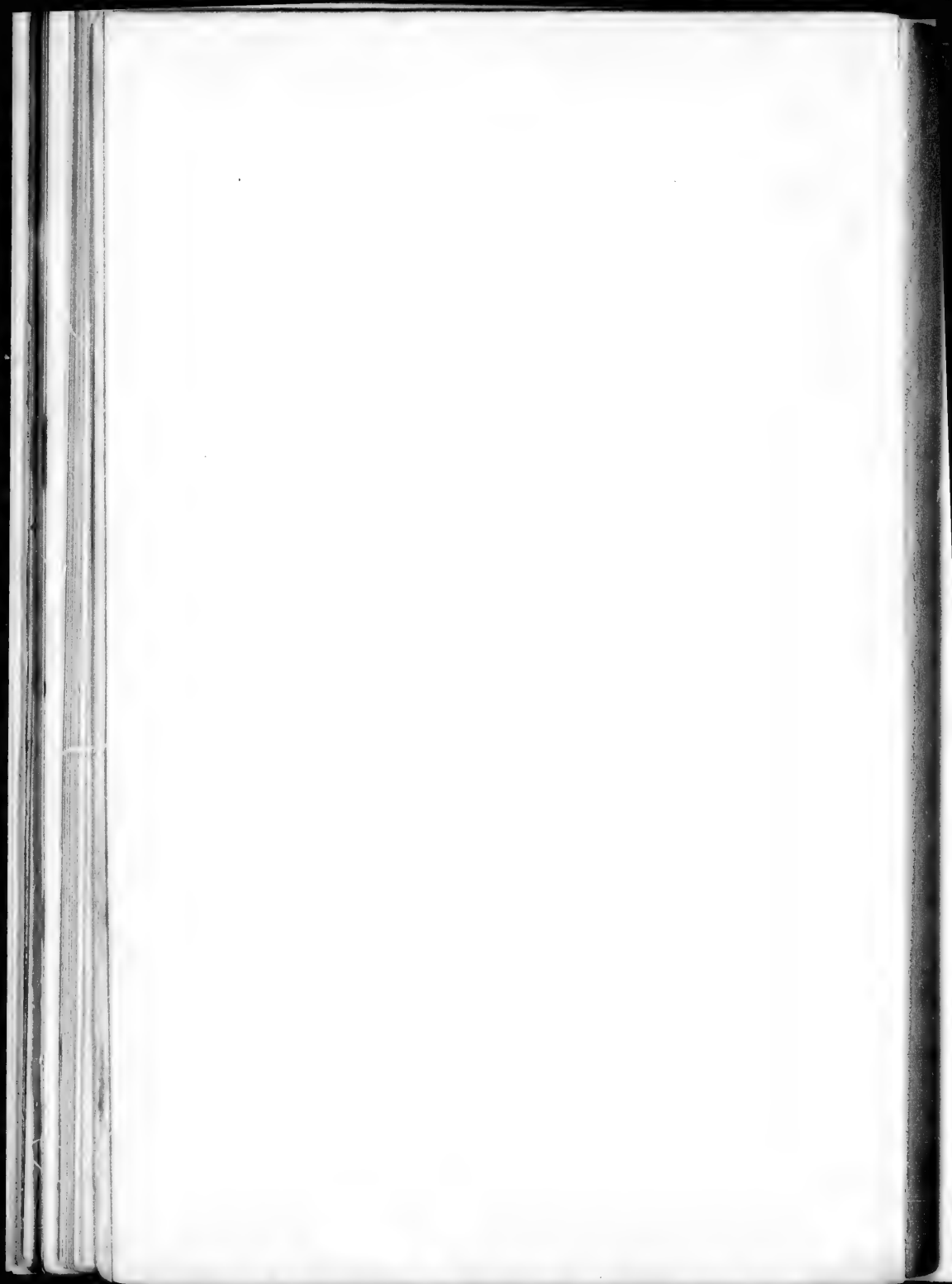


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DEAD HORSES ON THE SKAGWAY TRAIL



stores and settle permanently. Streets were laid out in perfect squares by surveyors, frame buildings for shops and dwellings were erected by the score, a town government was established, and the different steamship companies, realising the volume of business they would have to handle, built great wooden wharves over half a mile long out into the bay. By August 1898, twelve months after Skagway was founded, it had many blocks of stores and houses, miles of streets and broad sidewalks, public schools and churches, two newspapers, several hotels, two banks, a railway running back towards the lakes, saw-mills, wharves, and a pipeline that led to a lake on the summit of a neighbouring mountain and supplied the town with water that had pressure enough to render it unnecessary to have more than a hose with which to quench fires. The buildings were tastefully painted, the city had a very business-like appearance, and a street railway was under construction. Twelve months previous the ground upon which the little city stood was merely a wilderness.

The scenes on the Skagway, or White Pass Trail, can never be described so that the reader will get an adequate idea of the suffering and hardships endured by the men and horses while crossing. Hundreds of men gave up in despair and returned to their homes in the United States after having tried the trails for a few days and become utterly discouraged. The ones who finally succeeded in getting their winter supply of provisions to Lake Bennett did so only after weeks of incessant toil and exposure to the weather and a considerable outlay in money. Many died from

pneumonia and spinal meningitis, brought on presumably by sleeping on the damp ground; others were drowned in fording the streams and crossing the lakes, and some were so exhausted by continued



CAMP AMID SNOWDRIFTS

over-work that they were forced to return to their homes to recuperate their lost health.

Hundreds of horses were killed because in falling over rocks they broke their legs, making it necessary for the travellers to shoot them, and when men began to realise more and more the fact that they were totally unable to transport their goods across the mountains without the aid of these animals, the price of a horse rose to sixty pounds (or three hundred dollars). The horses would arrive in Skagway in excellent con-

dition, but a week's work carrying packs, weighing perhaps two hundred and fifty pounds, over the trails always left unmistakable signs of hardship. Then they had, too, little feed and rest. Hay and grain were both expensive and difficult to pack to the different points along the trail, and many a horse worked under these exceptionally trying conditions, beneath the warm sun and almost continual rain-storms, with little or no food. As they approached the rockier summits vegetation grew considerably less, and what grass they could find usually made the animals sick and unfit for work. And when the marsh lands were reached that lie between Lake Bennett and the three little lakes close to White Pass summit, many of them tottered under their heavy loads and sank into the black mire unable to rise. By actual count there were over two thousand dead horses on this last stretch of ground in September 1898, and it was possible at that time for a man to walk half a mile over the swamp without stepping from the carcasses.

The condition of the trail grew rapidly worse after August 15, and it became almost impossible for a horse to journey to the summit, a point that very few outfits had reached, because, rather than pack directly through it to Lake Bennett, they all chose to carry their goods about three miles at a time, and then return for other loads. This method of crowding all the traffic at one time on the first ten miles of the trail resulted in numerous blockages and consequent loss of time, and the swamps and bogs were so torn up by the trail that horses frequently sank deep in the mire and had to

be got out by means of ropes and poles. The work of digging them out of the bogs was so great that on many occasions men drew their revolvers and shot the animals rather than spend half a day extricating them.

The trail was so narrow in many places that horses were unable to pass, and it frequently happened that the horses journeying coastwards would have to stand for an hour at a time while the mountain-bound caravan was passing; and this loss of time, together with the wretched condition of the bogs, made it imperative that the gold-seekers should halt in their work and repair the trail before it should become wholly impassable. Meetings were called, committees appointed to handle the gangs of men, and several days were spent "corduroying" bogs by laying logs across the surface, blasting out slippery rocks, and making log bridges. Many of the adventurers objected to working on the trail, and in order to keep these from packing with their animals while the others repaired the trail it was closed by the Klondikers and no one was allowed to pass for two days.

But the Skagway Trail was a total failure as far as the summer of 1897 was concerned, and scarcely 10 per cent. of the men who started from Skagway ever reached Lake Bennett. Whenever the men gave up to return home they would offer to sell their provisions, which, of course, would have a value depending on the distance they had been moved up the trail. It often happened, however, that these disheartened men were unable to sell even a pound of provisions, because their fellow-travellers already had more than they could

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PACK-TEAM STARTING FOR LAKE BENNETT

get to the lakes, so the little *cache* of stores was abandoned beside the trail, and during the following winter enterprising merchants in Skagway sledged the goods to town and sold them.

The horses of the pack-trains would often fall on the smooth rocks in such a manner as to break a leg, or, when they were descending a sharp zigzag trail, would make a mis-step and be hurled over the steep hill-sides or bluffs by the weight of their packs. Once, while I was going up a steep incline, I came across a pack-train that was blockaded on a narrow trail because the leader had fallen, unable to rise. When the men were working to release it from the pack a horse farther back in the line made an awkward lunge that sent two others over the bluffs. One of the animals was killed outright, but the other fell through the top of a tree and escaped uninjured. It was a common thing to see animals mired to their necks, wholly unable to move either way.

Horses and mules were found to be the best pack-animals on the rough trails, and burrows were shown to be too small for work in the muddy flats. Waggon and other wheeled vehicles could be used only on the first four miles of the trail after leaving Skagway, but beyond that they were, of course, totally useless. Several oxen were used to carry loads on their backs, but they travelled too slowly and were unable to cross the boggy ground, a great deal of which was not corduroyed.

A certain packer who had made many contracts to take goods over to Lake Bennett failed so utterly to

keep his agreement that some of his more desperate patrons, headed by a character known as Montana Kid, seized his pack-train by force one day and took all their goods through to the lake. Then others, who had also been deceived into making contracts for packing, took possession of the train until they had their goods transported safely to the lake. Finally, the feeling against this unfortunate packer became so intense that he left for his home, taking a night-steamer down the canal.

On August 18 the *Willammette* sent her last lighter of goods to Skagway and then steamed across to Dyea to land a hundred of us, who had seen enough of the Skagway route, and had determined to undertake the crossing of the Chilcoot Pass without the formality of first seeing it. We thought that, in any event, it could be little worse than the White Pass route, and although the Chilcoot summit is eleven hundred feet higher than White Pass, which is about twenty-five hundred feet, the distance from Dyea, where we would land, to Lake Linderman, where we would build our boat, was nearly twenty miles shorter. And there was the extra advantage of a long steady rise towards the summit of Chilcoot instead of the succession of ups and downs that characterised the Skagway route.

There was no wharf where our goods could be landed, although wharves have since been built, and we were forced to carry them ashore in the ship's boat, and land them among the rocks on the beach. The Dyea River, a rushing stream that carried a greater

volume of water than the stream of Skagway, reached as far down into the sea as our rocks, but, when the tide was up, the sand-bars were covered, and the water extended almost to the Indian town of Dyea.

When all the freight was ashore the steamer raised her anchor and departed down the channel, sounding a few farewell blasts as she went. Then we took a small whitehall boat that the two men had made, and began the work of taking our supplies up the river to the Indian settlement, where we pitched our camp. After we had towed the first boat-load up the swift current we determined to utilise the mules for this work, so we spent the greater part of that night searching for them on an island where we had swum them from the steamer.

On the following day we took the largest mule, and after attaching a long rope to the boat, fastened the other end to a single-tree behind the mule, and found that by this method we could accomplish a given amount of work in half the usual time. Afterwards we towed our goods to Finnigan's Point, several miles up the Dyea River, in this manner, a thing that others lost no time in imitating.

The town of Dyea is composed entirely of huts and hovels that belong to the tribe of Dyea Indians, the only white man who lived there at the time we passed through being a trader in charge of Healy & Wilson's store. The Indians are rather smaller in size than the average white, but they are strong and are able to carry surprisingly heavy packs across the mountains to Lake Linderman, a distance of twenty-seven miles.

The cabins of the camp were built along either side of a winding road, and were seemingly filled with squaws and Indian children and Siwash dogs, the latter being exceptionally numerous.

The bucks of the camp were already hard at work carrying supplies across the mountains for some of our



ON THE TRAIL NEAR LAKE LINDERMAN

fellow-passengers, who had employed them at the exorbitantly high rate of one shilling and eightpence (or forty cents) a pound. In this way an Indian who would carry one hundred pounds on his back would earn eight pounds (or forty dollars) in four days. These "bucks" would start on a journey at any time of day, for they were just as comfortable sleeping in the damp forests as they were in their cabins in Dyéa. Each buck and Indian boy carried a small blanket tied around his waist, and took with him enough dried

salmon to keep him alive until he returned from the journey. They would sleep in the forest wherever night overtook them, and were always up and away in the morning before daybreak. The Indian girls often packed on the trails with their father and brothers, and it was not an unusual thing for one of them to carry a pack of seventy-five pounds over the mountain pass to Lake Linderman. The weights that some of the bucks would carry was astonishing. Once I met an Indian near the summit of Chilcoot Pass with five sacks of flour (two hundred and fifty pounds) strapped to his back, and very frequently they carried four such sacks at a time.

The squaws usually remained about the camp or paddled across the bay and up and down the Dyea River in the typical dug-out canoes. Their faces were stained black to improve complexions that were ordinarily bad enough, but the paint made them even more hideous, and it seemed that it was seldom removed. We often wondered when they would exhibit the complexion they so carefully guarded. The squaws were always busy about the camp, but it appeared that their most important duties lay in drying salmon on wooden racks near the camp and preparing hides of wild animals for winter clothing.

Alongside the trail that led through the town was the grave of the first man—Wall—who lost his life on the Dyea trail. This man had been drowned while towing a boat up the river about ten days before our arrival, and his comrades had buried him amid a clump of trees not far from the trail, marking the grave

with a board upon which was painted the name of the deceased and the date of his death.

The journey to Lake Linderman across Chilcoot Pass was considerably less tedious and tiresome than the Skagway-Bennett route, because there were fewer miles of swamp travel. The trail from the sea led through the narrow valley of the Dyea River, through primitive forests and across wide expanses of creek gravels, to a point where it swerved suddenly to the right and entered the canyon that leads up past Sheep Camp and the Scales to the summit of Chilcoot Pass. On either side of this wild little valley were high mountains with great pale-green glaciers covering their summits, and curving down towards the floor of the canyon. The air was moist and heavy but intensely exhilarating, and everywhere were manifest the damp, spring-like conditions peculiar to the forests of the Pacific North-West.

Turning into the canyon leading towards the summit, the trail left the level of the stream and followed along the side of the mountain ridge, several hundred feet above the wild stream, and sometimes passing a rocky precipice that rose almost perpendicularly from the river to the trail. Presently we crossed this little stream and followed the trail for three or four miles across the flats until we reached Sheep Camp, a little settlement of tents where men usually rested before beginning the steeper climb to the summit.

Then we followed a very bad bit of trail that brought back memories of experiences at Skagway, until we reached Stone House, an immense square-shaped rock

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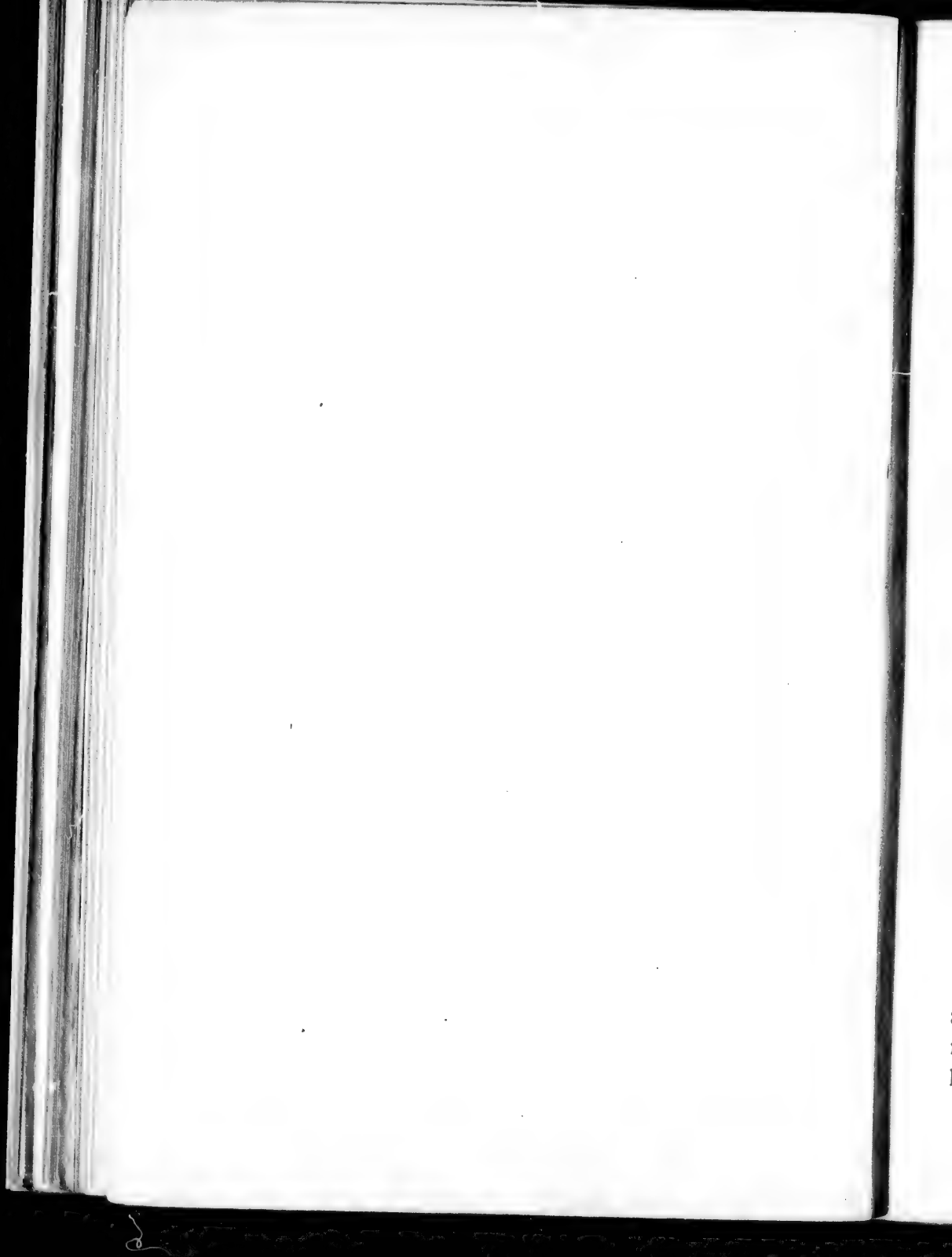
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NEAR THE SUMMIT OF CHILCOOT PASS



somewhat resembling a house, and under which was a spacious cave partly filled with dry leaves, where the Indians, and sometimes the miners, crawled for a night's rest or shelter from the storm. From thence on the trail grew gradually steeper for about one and a half miles, over great rock masses that plainly showed



CANYON NEAR SUMMIT OF WHITE PASS

evidences of glacial action, until we reached a little depression, with a flat, rocky floor, known as the Scales, where the final ascent of the Chilcoot summit is begun. Since leaving Sheep Camp we had been travelling over a very rocky district, where there were no trees and very little brush.

The ascent from the Scales to the summit was made among great masses of immense rocks that lay promiscuously on the steep slope, but through which we had no difficulty in finding a trail. There was no ice,

and only once or twice did we encounter little patches of snow. The ascent was not particularly difficult, nor was it at all dangerous, and we reached the comparatively sharp, rugged summit in an hour and a half after leaving the Scales.

From this point the trail descended a sharp incline over a snow-field, and round Crater Lake to the head of a small but swift river, fed by melting snow and ice. The travelling along this stream was rather difficult, because we had to pick our way at times over broken rock that lay partly submerged in the stream by the side of ragged bluffs. Then we encountered muddy patches and small hills, and finally we reached the head of Long Lake, a sheet of water one mile long. We crossed this lake in a boat, although there was a trail high up on the mountain side where the Indians usually travelled.

After crossing Long Lake we followed the Indian trail around a little body of water called Deep Lake, climbed to the summit of a ridge, and beheld Lake Linderman, the end of the land journey and the point of embarkation for the gold-fields. A little camp of white tents could be seen at the upper end of this beautiful sheet of water, and the busy hum of the whipsaws could be plainly heard as Klondikers who had preceded us were hurrying them through the logs to make boards for their boats. Then we returned to Dyce, convinced that our chance of getting supplies across to the lake were much better than if we had chosen the Skagway route, having been absent on the journey three days.

We succeeded in towing our supplies to Finnigan's Point, four and one-half miles from Dyea, with the boat and the mules, and then we packed it to the mouth of Sheep Camp Canyon. The trail over the gravel-bars was good, and we experienced little difficulty, but when we encountered the trail along the mountain side and began the work of ascending the grades, and then creeping over the corduroyed sections, we found it particularly trying to both men and animals. Three



A LIFE-LINE

enterprising men had built a log bridge across the swift river, too deep to be forded, and had spent considerable time corduroying the more impassable places, taking their pay for the work by charging toll across the bridge. The trail was bad from this bridge on through Sheep Camp, and from the latter place to Stone House it was abominable. The mud was so deep that burrows were wholly unable to travel, and the rocks were so slippery that a number of horses suffered broken limbs and had to be

shot. A new horse-trail was made about that time from Stone House to Scales, but between that point and Crater Lake horses were useless.

All along the trail could be seen the same incidents we had noticed on the White Pass Trail—men and horses struggling along with immense burdens, tents strewn promiscuously along the trail, and scenes of frantic effort; there were Indians—men and women and boys, none of whom were seen on the Skagway route, carrying heavy packs over the trail. There were not nearly so many men travelling on the Chilcoot Trail as on the Skagway; the travel was very much easier and shorter, and the number of Klondikers who chose this last route in preference to the other, and who finally succeeded in reaching the lake, was very much larger. The amount of suffering was much less, and there were comparatively few horses killed by accident or exhaustion, although a number were shot when the winter came, because their owners could not leave them to starve in the snow-drifts.

There was a little log cabin at Sheep Camp that the owner said was an hotel, and men who had given up reaching the gold-fields that autumn, and had gone to work carrying goods for those who had not, ate their meals there, and paid a shilling (twenty-five cents) each night for the privilege of sleeping in their own blankets on the plank floor. I believe, however, that this and a tent saloon belonging to Arizona Charley, a Wild-West character, were the only evidences of civilisation the camp could boast of.

From the Scales our goods had to be carried on our

backs—something we were very well used to at that time—up the steep, rocky inclines to the summit, and then down on the other side to Crater Lake. The season was rather late, so the packers raised the price per pound to fourpence (eight cents) from the Scales to the lake, a journey they could complete three times a day. A man ordinarily took a hundred pounds at a time, and the day's earnings of a packer would often be five pounds (twenty-five dollars).

Up to this time horses had never been taken over the summit of Chilcoat Pass, because the thing was thought to be impossible. But it always requires a new-comer in a district to demonstrate to the older inhabitants that impossible things are possible, and it fell to the lot of a Seattle man—everybody came from Seattle, it seemed—to prove that the thing could be done. Accordingly, he started one morning with a big white mule, an excellent pack animal, and began the slow, tedious work of finding a trail over which the animal could walk. The man with the mule was laughed at for his folly, but he had the last laugh, for he succeeded before noon in getting the animal, which was somewhat cut about the legs by jagged rocks, but otherwise unhurt, over the summit to Crater Lake. Others followed the example set by the Seattle man, and soon there were many horses and mules packing between Crater Lake and Lake Linderman. Goats and sheep, and even cattle, were afterwards driven across to the lakes to be slaughtered.

We had our goods ferried across Crater Lake, a distance of half a mile, and then began the work of

carrying it to Long Lake over the three-mile portage that has already been described. This was undoubtedly the worst of all our experiences, and I have since wondered how so many men stood the exposure and the hard toil with so few fatal results.

The trail at this point led through the streams, along rocky bluffs, and over muddy hills and flats, and, during the ten days that we were there, there was scarcely an hour, either day or night, when it was not either raining or snowing. Our clothing was always wet through, and when we returned to our camps on Long Lake at night, we would find everything in them saturated with rain-water. Our tent was of heavy canvas, but the rain always found a way through it, and little rivulets from the mountain sides were running beneath it and soaking our blankets. Our canvas clothing bags received their share of the rain, so that we had no change of dry clothing, and firewood was so scarce that we could never have more than one warm meal a day. Some of our provisions, particularly the dried fruit, were damp, and had to be re-dried, but our flour, although it was wet, was practically uninjured, because flour "cakes" next to the canvas covering, and this protects the rest.

Every day, it seemed, we were forced to face a blinding rain or snow-storm on our way back to Crater Lake for another pack, and our rubber clothes were all that protected our chests—the rest was always water-soaked. We returned late one evening, after one of these memorable trips to Crater Lake, and found a dozen Klondikers hard at work digging a

grave on the mountain side not far from our camp. One of their number had died that afternoon from pneumonia, and these men were burying him in a coffin made of the lumber he had carried for his boat, without religious ceremony and during the height of a severe storm. There were other cases of pneumonia resulting from exposure, but I believe there were comparatively few deaths.

These incessant rains, peculiar to the Alaskan coast, but not to the interior country, wrought great havoc on the Skagway Trail, rendering it almost impassable and causing it to be blocked for repairs, an occurrence that was never experienced on the Dyea Trail.

We crossed Long Lake in a boat, the owner of which did a thriving business as ferryman, and then took another small boat, made of canvas, across Deep Lake to the beginning of the last portage of two and a half miles to Lake Linderman. We completed this distance with all our supplies in three days, and at last we were on the shores of the lake that was the beginning of the water-way to Dawson.

About this time it became necessary for one of my comrades and myself to return to Dyea to arrange about some freight that was to have followed us. We left Lake Linderman at noon, travelling against a blinding rain-storm that changed to snow as we neared the summit of the Pass. We arrived on the crest of the divide at nightfall, and found that eight inches of snow covered the rocks and obliterated the trail. But we had crossed the mountain so often that we had little difficulty in descending to the Scales, although

we were halted half a dozen times to respond to the shouts of men who had followed us and lost the trail. We reached the little row of tents at the Scales at seven o'clock, and then continued along down the mountain defile to Stone House. It was raining hard, and we were so completely worn out by the hard travel that we stopped and debated whether or not we could crawl beneath the rock to rest for the night. But our hunger was assuming the condition commonly described as "gnawing," and it was this that determined us to undertake the two-mile tramp through great pools of sloppy mud and water and over the worst portion of the trail, to Sheep Camp, a decision that afterwards proved very fortunate.

We reached the camp about nine o'clock at night, hungry, tired, and covered with mud. Then we ate the best meal of our lives—nothing at the Cecil or the Imperial ever tasted so good—and, after drying our clothing by the fire, we lay down on the floor and went to sleep in our blankets among the half-hundred other travellers, who so filled the little "hotel" that they were sleeping on the tables and benches as well as on the plank floor.

We arose early and had just finished breakfast when we heard a dull roaring sound resembling the terrifying noises made by streams when clouds have burst. There were shouts outside the cabin, and the crowds of men within stampeded through the door, believing that a cataract of water was rushing down the canyon and that the cabin might be swept away. The roaring sound up towards the summits continued and grew

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CANYON NEAR SUMMIT OF CHILCOOT PASS



louder and louder, so that most of us, not knowing precisely what had happened, sought higher ground for safety.

Presently a wall of water rushed by the camp, completely flooding the flat directly opposite the hotel and submerging the tents, in many of which people were sleeping. The rush of the wall of water had been seen by two men nearly ten minutes before it reached the camp, but they were unable to reach each individual tent and give the alarm. The flood tore the tents from their fastenings and swept the occupants into the stream, which had so increased in width and volume that the little crowd of men on the opposite bank were wholly unable to lend any assistance to the half-dozen who could be seen struggling for their lives in the muddy waters, now sinking entirely from sight, now rising to the surface, catching at stumps and branches only to be drawn under again. During all the while the grinding noise made by the great boulders that were being rolled along the bed of the stream, and the roar and rush of the turbulent waters, were deafening, and the shouts of encouragement to the struggling men were unheard.

In ten or fifteen minutes the waters subsided, and we hastened across to the flats where the damage had been done. We found that the place where a few moments before many tents had stood was covered beneath four or five feet of *débris*, and the tents and blankets and sacks of provisions were protruding, partially buried, from the sand. Other supplies had been washed on down the canyon by the rushing waters

that afterwards swept away *caches* of provisions farther down towards the mouth of the stream. As nearly as could be ascertained no lives were lost in the tents on the flat, though the men who had witnessed the flood from the opposite bank were positive that they had seen three bodies washed past from above. But the conditions under which men travelled, carrying their goods over short distances and then establishing a second camp on ahead, made it difficult to find out how many persons had occupied the flat before the flood came, and for this reason it will never be known how many deaths resulted. Many persons entertained the belief that at least six lives were lost in the flood.

About an hour after the waters subsided two men came to Sheep Camp from the Scales, and reported that the flood had been caused by the bursting of a lake that had gathered on a glacier near Stone House, the ice that held it having unexpectedly given way. The torrent had descended a sharp defile, throwing rocks and *débris* in every direction, and striking the main canyon at Stone House in such a way as to lift that great rock, weighing many tons, and to wash it a quarter of a mile down the canyon. And this was the rock that we might have been sleeping under.

A young man named Choyinski, who had been passing Stone House at the time the water came down, had been caught by the mad waters and hurled with the *débris* a distance of many yards, and, shortly after he was found, death relieved him of the sufferings he had endured from a hundred broken bones.

Three days later, while I was returning from Dyea, I seated myself on a rock near the spot where the Stone House had formerly stood. Presently an Indian packer came laboriously along and seated himself on the same rock, also to rest. Suddenly he withdrew his arms from his pack-strap and rushed madly towards the opposite mountain. My first impulse was to follow, but I could see no cause for alarm, so I remained where I was. About five minutes later the Indian came back, and when I asked him why he had run he pointed to the glacier and made an imitating sound intended to convey the impression that the ice of the glacier was cracking. He hastily shouldered his pack and hurried on up the trail towards the summit, and this time I followed him.

At this same place, or very near it, a snow-slide occurred during the spring of 1898 at the time when hundreds of men were sledding provisions across the mountains preparatory to the journey to the gold-fields, burying many men and covering a dozen tents to a great depth. Rescue parties at once set to work digging in the snow, and many men were brought out in an unconscious condition, and afterwards revived; but during the progress of the work, and after the snow had melted in the spring, more than sixty bodies were recovered. Many of these unfortunates had been peacefully sleeping in their tents when death overtook them, and, from the indications, it was evident that they had never awakened.

It was noticeable also that a majority of those buried had evidently tried to force the snow back from their

heads, probably thinking to increase the air-space, and, when their bodies were afterwards found in the cold embrace of death, the hands, in nearly every case, were raised to the face.

I met a man in Dawson during the summer of 1898



JOURNEYING TOWARDS THE LAKES

who had been among the men buried by the snow, but rescued in time to save his life. He was sleeping in his tent when the snow-slide covered it up. He remembered having been awakened by the great pressure on and around him, and that he had realised what had happened. But as the air, which was under considerable pressure, became vitiated, he felt the sleep coming over him that he was unable to resist. Finally, he was awakened by a cold feeling about his head, and he looked up and saw his rescuers resting on their

shovels, and one of them vigorously rubbing his face with snow. He had been rescued none too soon.

In comparing the two trails it might be said that while a larger number of the Klondikers endeavoured to reach the lakes by way of the White Pass than by Chilcoot, fewer of them in proportion to the numbers accomplished their purpose. Stripped of all the mechanical improvements that have since been made on both routes, the Chilcoot Trail, for those who intend taking goods across the mountains in summer-time, is undoubtedly the best, but for winter travel I believe the Skagway route is in every way preferable. Its summit is not so high nor so often storm-swept as the summit of Chilcoot, and there is considerably less danger from slides.

A steel-cable tramway has been built over Chilcoot Pass which greatly expedites the traffic, but nothing can be done to keep the travel on this route when the White Pass Railway, which has already been built to the summit of the Pass (March 1, 1899), is completed between Skagway and Lake Bennett. Passengers and freight will then be carried from the sea across the mountains to the head lakes in half as many hours as it formerly took weeks, and without one vestige of the hardships and perils and privations that were then experienced.



WHITE HORSE RAPIDS

CHAPTER III

From the Lakes to the Gold-fields—The Threatened Approach of Winter—Boat-building on Lake Linderman and Lake Bennett—The Start Across Linderman—Lake Bennett—Storm-bound on the Lakes—Caribou Crossing—The First Ice—Tagish Lake and the Windy Arm—Dangers in Crossing the Mountain Lakes—Six-Mile River—Customs Officers—Marsh Lake—Fifty-Mile River—Miles Canyon—Squaw Rapids—White Horse Rapids—Lake Le Barge—Dangers in Thirty-Mile River—Wrecks—The Hootalinqua—Big Salmon—Little Salmon—Five Fingers—Rink Rapids—Fort Selkirk and the Pelly—The Stewart River—Drifting with the Ice—Arrival in Dawson.

FROM the end of the mountain trail our journey to the gold-fields lay entirely upon the water, and it became necessary for us to build a boat, as hundreds of others were already doing. The first winter snows had fallen some days before, and thin ice was forming during the

cold nights on the quiet pools. Lake Linderman spread out before us, a still, beautiful sheet of water, but the cold wintry blasts that swept across its surface made it rather uninviting, almost forbidding. The approach of winter was manifest on every side, and quite a number of the Klondikers lost heart, even after they had succeeded in reaching the lake with their provisions, because they feared that winter might descend upon them while they were travelling through the uninhabited interior and they would be ice-bound until spring. The signs of winter storms, on the other hand, spurred others on with a renewed determination, and they set about building their boats with all possible haste.

There were no saw-mills on Lake Linderman, and it was necessary for the men to go into the forests, fell the trees, and then float the logs down the streams and across the lake to the camp, where they were placed on saw-pits and made into rough boards. The timber around the lake was ordinarily quite small, and all the trees of a suitable diameter had been cut from a section having a radius of several miles from the lake shore, rendering it necessary for us to go three or four miles up a small tributary stream in search of larger trees.

We had travelled fully three miles one morning in search of these when we came upon a bridge made of poles, across which the men who had preceded us had walked. The river, which was undoubtedly fed by a glacier, was exceptionally high at that hour, and the rushing water was almost up to the poles. We crossed

with considerable difficulty, the poles being so weak that they dropped beneath the water, which sent a cloud of spray over us and threatened at every moment to sweep the poles from their rock supports. The stream was quite wide, and the crossing was only effected after we had walked over several sets of poles located in equally precarious positions.

After an extended search we found four or five trees large enough to make twelve-inch boards ; so we cut these, rolled them down the mountain and into the rushing stream, which afterwards carried them into the lake. But when we returned in the evening to where the pole bridges had been, we found that the stream had swollen and washed them away. The rock supports were submerged, and, there being no large trees in such a position that they could be felled across the stream, we were forced to hunt a trail for three miles through thick underbrush to the lake, where we arrived at dark. There were other men there in exactly the same predicament as we, so we built great fires to dry our clothing, and then tried to attract the attention of the men in the camp on the opposite side of the lake, separated from us by the mad river. After hours of fruitless signalling and shouting we gave up the idea of reaching camp that night, and were preparing greater fires, so that we might at least keep warm until morning, when a boat that some Klondikers had built several miles up the stream appeared suddenly round a bend in the little river and made a landing near our camp in response to our calls for help. We were all carried across the lake to our camp on the maiden

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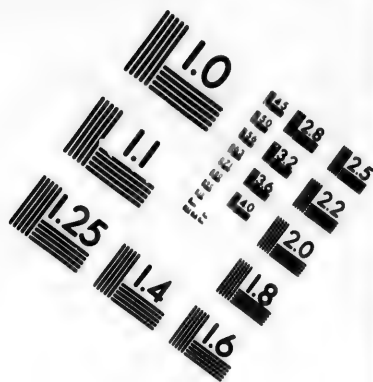


A WINTER SCENE NEAR THE LAKES

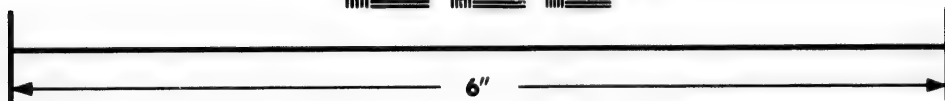
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voyage of this little craft, which on the morrow would begin its long journey across mountain lakes and through rivers and rapids to the gold-fields of the Klondike. When we finally got our logs to camp we hired a saw-pit that some enterprising man had erected for the purpose, and rolled our logs one by one up the incline leading to it. Then began the work of sawing out the boards, and it was such violent, tiresome exercise that for months afterwards we heard nothing but complaints from the men who had experienced it. Even the strongest, who had been accustomed to hard physical labour, were usually completely exhausted after a half-day's trial at whip-sawing, and they never were able afterwards to speak "whip-sawing" without the accompaniment of a shower of curses. The whip-saw has straight teeth with no set, sharpened so that the saw cuts only as it moves one way—downward. Two men saw together, one standing on the log and the other in the pit beneath. Then they work the saw up and down, carefully following the pencil lines marking the intended width of the board. This kind of work brings into play certain muscles of the arms, shoulders, and back that other forms of labour have never developed, causing the resulting consternation among the beginners.

When the boards are sawed, half the task of boat-building is over. The men then saw out the knees for the boat, nail them together in the shape they expect the boat to assume, and then put on the side and bottom boards. The cracks are carefully caulked and pitched. A mast is put in, seats are nailed down,



Resolution test chart showing patterns of vertical and horizontal lines with numerical values ranging from 1.0 to 4.0.



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oars are made, and the craft is ready for launching. The men who were at work sawing boards for their own boats were always willing to lend a hand in these launchings, and when the boat began its journey towards Dawson the adventurers would be cheered on by shouts of farewell and good luck, and the reports of numerous guns and rifles fired in honour of the event. Pitch, oakum, and nails were scarce at Lake Linderman during the boat-building season, and then often sold at fabulous prices.

When our own boat was finished, we found that while it rowed very easily on the lake, it had too little breadth for the length, and also being sharp at both ends was exceedingly cranky. But there was no time then to make alterations in the model, so we loaded our supplies, the heaviest in the bottom and the lightest on top, and set out across the lake, amid a small fusillade of firearms and shouts of good luck from the friends we had known on the trail.

As we left the camp we looked towards the mountain summits and saw them clouded in a snow-storm. A straggling line of men and horses could still be seen slowly picking their way down the last hill-side near the lake, bearing their burdens, apparently undaunted by the approach of the severe winter. And we could hear the sounds of dozens of whip-saws as they were plied rapidly through the logs by the already worn-out men in their mad haste to finish the building of their boats.

Lake Linderman is six miles long, and we crossed it in about two hours, arriving at the lower end just at

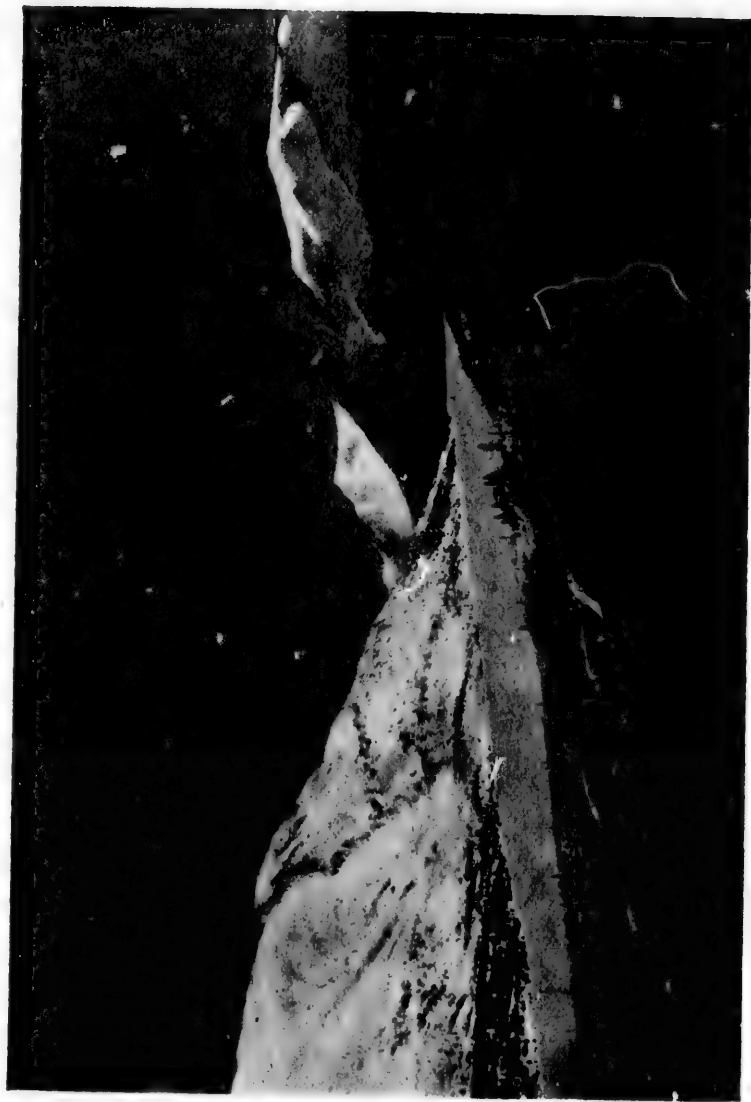
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LAKE LINDERMAN IN WINTER

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dusk. We pitched our tent in a protected spot, and then went ahead to see what conditions we would have to encounter on the following day. We found that Lake Linderman was separated from Lake Bennett by a strip of land about a quarter of a mile wide, and that the little river connecting them was at that time wild and rushing. Great rocks lay in the channel in such a manner that it was considered too dangerous to attempt running a boat through it without lines. Many accidents had happened before our arrival, and hundreds of pounds of priceless provisions had been damaged. Realising the danger they would incur of losing their provisions in the water, the men were carrying them across this little portage to the head of Lake Bennett, a performance that we imitated on the following day. When our last sack of flour had been carried to the shore of Lake Bennett, we returned to Linderman to bring the empty boat through the Rapids. This was finally accomplished by making two lines fast to the bow, each one being held by a man on opposite banks of the river, and having a third man in the boat with a long pole to help keep it clear from the rocks. By letting the lines out or drawing them in, the boat could be held in any position in the river and handled among the rocks without much difficulty, although the current at times was such that we had to take a turn round a neighbouring tree with the lines to steady her.

The little camp at the head of Lake Bennett presented the same typical appearance as the camp at

Lake Linderman, although it was somewhat larger. The dwellings were, of course, all tents, but a log cabin—the next step in the advance of civilisation to the “tent period”—was being built for winter use. Men and horses came straggling in from the Skagway Trail—the horses thin and gaunt-looking and the men tired and worn, thankful that their weeks of ceaseless, killing toil were at an end. A few miles away lay the

swamps that had proved to be an insurmountable barrier to hundreds of horses, which fell with their packs, unable to rise.

A little saw-mill had been hurriedly built near the settlement, and the proprietors were working night and day to saw enough lumber



SAWING LUMBER

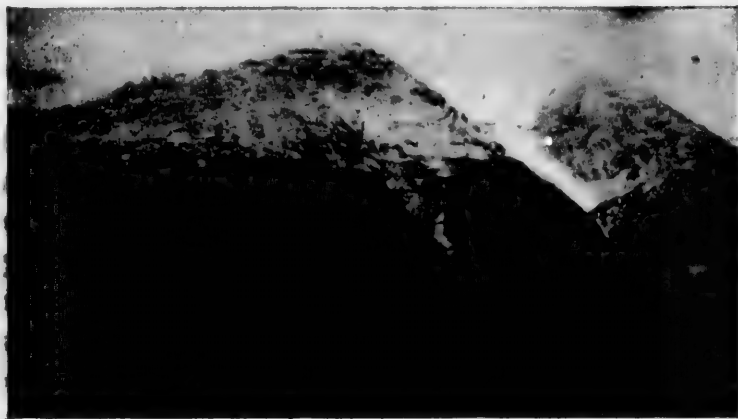
to fill the orders of the boat-builders. It was quite impossible for the mill-owners to hire men to cut logs, so they arranged with those who wanted boards that, if they would cut a certain number of logs and float them to the mill, they could take sufficient lumber to build a boat. There were men at the mills who made a business of boat-

building, and they all made money, selling the boats for sixty pounds (or three hundred dollars) each. As the season advanced and the margin of time that would elapse before winter set in to block the travel grew less and less, the value of these boats gradually increased, so that one hundred pounds (or five hundred dollars) was sometimes paid. When the little mill began operations the owners had agreed to build boats for those who ordered them early for fifty pounds (two hundred and fifty dollars), but when the prices advanced the mill-men sold them to whoever wanted them irrespective of their former contracts.

On September 30 we set out across Lake Bennett, doubtful if we could complete half the distance to the gold-fields before we were frozen in. The correspondent of a New York newspaper had made inquiry among men who were familiar with autumn travel on the lakes and rivers, and had found that the latest average date that one could leave the upper lake and reasonably hope to reach the lower river points before the ice froze was September 16. There were instances noted where boats had left as late as October 10, and successfully made the journey, while during one season a boat had left Bennett on September 12 and had been frozen in near Sixty-Mile Post. There was considerable encouragement in the first of these facts, and I noticed that the men who were not yet ready to start were continually talking of this episode concerning October 10, completely ignoring the more dismal reference to September 12.

Lake Bennett is a beautiful sheet of water about

thirty miles long and half that distance in width, hemmed in on nearly every side by great granite mountains that tower in simple grandeur to a height of several thousand feet above the surface of the lake. The magnificent scenery on this sheet of water, together with that of all the other lakes, and particularly that of Le Barge and Tagish, will compare favourably with other lakes of North America that are better known



MOUNTAINS ON THE SHORES OF LAKE BENNETT

and more noted for their beauty. The water was dark, indicating considerable depth, and the mountains in many places rose abruptly from the shore. An arm of Lake Bennett extends from one side into the mountains for a considerable distance, and very few men have ever explored it. A few belated wild ducks that had not yet begun their journey southwards were scattered over the surface of the lake, and the black raven, found everywhere in the North, but never in

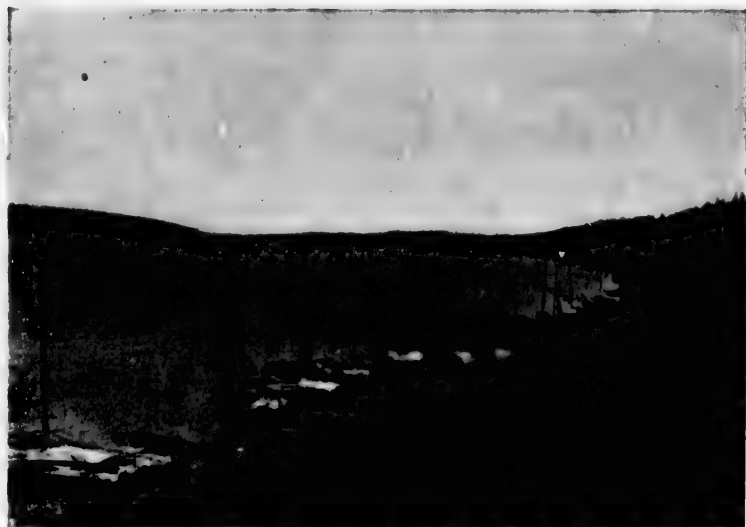
great numbers, was occasionally seen flying along the steep shore bluffs.

September 30 dawned bleak and cloudy, and the approach of a storm was imminent. We rowed all day across the lake, not stopping for lunch at noon, and at night camped on the right bank about ten miles from Caribou Crossing, a stream joining the lower end of Lake Bennett with Lake Tagish. We pitched our camp on the gravel beaches, having for neighbours six men whom we had met on the trail. During the night the storm broke in all its fury, covering the ground to a depth of over a foot and penetrating our tents. The gale so increased in violence on the following day that we were forced to lie storm-bound in our tents, unable to launch our boats against the waves that rolled in from the lake and reached threateningly up towards our camp. The moist winds were intensely cold, and we had to remain in the tents to keep warm. We thought at the time that this blizzard was the equinoctial storm somewhat late, and that winter had set in in earnest. But after we had lain thus helpless for forty-eight hours, the weather improved, and we were able to proceed across the lake. We found that ice was forming across the still waters of Caribou Crossing, and we had to make our way through irregular patches by breaking the ice from the boat with long poles.

Tagish Lake is usually considered more dangerous to travellers because it has an extension on the right-hand side going down, called Windy Arm, through which the wind seems almost to blow a gale and whip

68 TWELVE MONTHS IN KLONDIKE

up the surface of the lake in such a way as to imperil the boats. The startling rapidity with which the waves rise on these lakes of high altitudes is remarkable, and numerous disasters have befallen miners at the mouth of Windy Arm. On the day of our crossing the surface



BOATS WAITING THEIR TURN AT CUSTOM OFFICE

was quiet and placid, and we rowed the distance in safety.

Tagish Lake is connected with Marsh Lake by Six-Mile River, and when we were following along its tortuous course our attention was attracted to the shore by a rifle-shot. Upon looking in that direction we saw the Canadian flag floating from the top of a tall tree, and beneath it were several tents and a little group of men. We pulled ashore, and found that these men were the Canadian customs officers,

whom we had known to be located somewhere in the interior; and after a short delay we declared our cargo, paid our duty, and proceeded on into Lake Marsh.

The shores of this lake are flat and marshy, a fact suggesting its name; the mountains have receded somewhat, and the lake has lost the beautiful grandeur of Bennett and Tagish. The marshes are breeding-places for thousands of ducks, and we had little difficulty in shooting from the boat a dozen of the stragglers that had not yet left for the sunny South. When we neared the end of this lake a severe gale was encountered, and we had an excellent illustration of the danger of crossing these sheets of water, a danger that old-timers have often declared to be feared even more than the river rapids. Winds spring up in a remarkably short time, and the surface of the water is soon a mass of great waves, large enough to swamp the overloaded crafts that, unfortunately, are nearly always manned by men who know absolutely nothing about the management of a boat. Almost every party that reached Dawson had a tale to tell of narrow escape from capsizing on the lakes, and it is probable that not a few fatalities of which nothing is definitely known occurred from this cause. The gales are as apt to blow on one lake as another, although Tagish and Bennett seem to bear the brunt of all the complaint, and when the waves rise it is almost impossible for a craft to find a sheltered landing-place along the rocky beaches.

When we were crossing Lake Marsh I heard a roaring sound behind us, but on looking back I could see

nothing that would cause apprehension. But as the sound increased, I stood up in the boat and saw a great patch of white-caps, giving the appearance of shoals, and approaching under the impetus of a heavy gale. Our sail was up for the first time on the voyage, and as the distance to the shore was very great, we decided to remain where we were and take the squall as it came.

In a very few moments it was upon us, and we soon realised that we were travelling through the water with great speed. Our boat was so loaded that there was scarcely eight inches of freeboard, making it possible for the water to wash over at every wave. The sail made her list considerably, and some of the outfit was piled so high above the sides that the two men who accompanied me lay in the bottom of the boat and on the side opposite the sail to keep her on a comparatively even keel.

We flew along at this speed for half an hour, shipping considerable water as we went, until we saw greater waves approaching, and also what appeared to be a fresh gale of wind. When we built the boat we had had no pulleys for the ropes to run through, so I had fastened a forked stick well up the mast for the ropes that were attached to the spanker-boom, and when the heavier seas and winds reached us one of the men cut the rope with a knife when it failed to run smoothly through the wooden fork, fearing that we were capsizing. When the immediate danger was over and the wind had moderated a trifle we repaired the rope and hoisted the sail. Half an hour later we sailed

with the speed of an ocean liner into the head of Fifty-Mile River, which leads on to Lake Le Barge, safe from the storm, and thankful that we had escaped.

When we reached an eddy we put the boat about and landed. Afterwards I ascended a high hill and looked back across the storm-beaten lake to see, if I could, the three crafts that had been following us. To my surprise there was not a single sail in sight, and I could see nothing along the shores that resembled a boat. Whether or not these Klondikers had allowed their boats to be thrown on to the beach by the waves, or whether they had been capsized and the occupants drowned, I cannot say. One of these boats was a Peterborough canoe, and as the man who sailed it had always kept close to the lee shore, I believe he effected a safe landing, but the others had boats like our own, and had been nearer the middle of the lake, directly in our wake, when the full force of the storm struck us.

Fifty-Mile River follows a tortuous course between hills of less elevation than we had just seen, and at the time that we passed they were white with snow. The stream was not difficult to navigate, excepting, of course, at Miles Canyon and White Horse Rapids, where we arrived on October 4. The hills and valleys along this stream are quite heavily timbered, and there was an abundance of excellent camping-places and dry wood for our fires.

Miles Canyon is three-quarters of a mile long, with perpendicular walls of six and seven sided rock columns, through which the water rushes with great

speed because of the narrowness of this defile in comparison with the width of the river both above and below it. The canyon is divided near the middle by a wide pool, but the rush of water is so great that it crossed the pool in long waves, forming small whirlpools on either side.

The water strikes the walls of the canyon and then deflects directly towards the centre, forming waves of considerable size, and throwing water and fine spray in every direction. It becomes necessary for the travellers to guide their boats through this dangerous place, and the speed of the water is such that the run may be made in about four minutes. The venture is not considered so very dangerous if the boat can be kept in the middle of the stream, where the waves run highest and the water fastest; but several casualties have already occurred, which, together with the forbidding look of the rushing waters as they are viewed from the walls of the canyon, are usually sufficient to determine many not to make the attempt themselves, but to hire pilots to take their boats through for them. The canyon is a most picturesque bit of wild mountain scenery, and one seldom encounters a parallel. For a distance of several miles below the canyon the channel is strewn with rocks, through which it is difficult to find a safe passage. This stretch of water is called Squaw Rapids. Immediately below these rapids we came to White Horse Rapids, where many men have met their death, but beyond which there are no more serious barriers in the water journey to the gold-fields.

We carried six hundred pounds of our cargo round

Miles Canyon, as others were doing, so as to lighten the boat and yet leave enough weight to make her reasonably steady. Then we rowed out into the stream, heading for the canyon, two of us pulling at the oars to give the boat a steering headway in the swift water, and the third at the helm ; and, as we left the bank, I saw quite a number of the more timid Klondikers hurrying up to the walls of the canyon to look down upon us as we shot through.

In a moment or two I felt the boat lunge suddenly forward, as the swift current caught it and drew it into the mouth of the canyon ; two high walls seemed to shoot past us with great speed, and we were instantly in the midst of the surging, dashing waters that had looked so very uninviting from the walls above. I glanced up and saw the heads of twenty or thirty people, who were craning their necks to watch what might happen to us, and a moment later we were past them and into the worst of it.

During all these exciting moments we pulled long, steady strokes, irrespective of the waves, and the man in the stern who held the steering oar was working it violently, first one way and then the other, in an endeavour to keep the craft in the very centre of the canyon. We were soon in the dividing pool and between the whirlpools, but an instant later we were drawn into the second canyon, where the waves ran highest and wildest. We were tossing about like a cork in a choppy sea when a sudden awkward lurch of the boat caused her to ship a great quantity of water that drenched us all through and through. We emerged from the

canyon as rapidly as we had entered it, and landed in a little eddy on the right bank—three and a half minutes on the voyage. We had previously taken the precaution of covering our provisions with rubber blankets, and they were found not to be damaged in the least by the water, so we hastily reloaded the goods we had carried round on the trail and proceeded on down the river.

Several boats were wrecked against the walls of the canyon at the time we were there, but the men who were in them succeeded in every instance in saving themselves. One party of three had their boat smashed by striking the walls, and then, when it capsized and lost its cargo, all three succeeded in clinging to it as it was swept, bottom up, through the last half of the canyon and on through White Horse Rapids, after which the men were picked up by other Klondikers who followed them in small boats.

In the spring of 1898 George Torrence, a lumberman, took a raft of boards eighty feet long and forty feet wide through this narrow canyon in safety, but not without an accident to himself. A wave caught the blade of the heavy steering oar in such a way that the long pole-handle swept violently across the raft, catching Torrence and hurling him through the air. Fortunately he grasped the mast of a small boat that had been trailing behind for use in case of accident, and fell rather helplessly into the craft, in which he completed the trip through the canyon. Torrence suffered a broken arm, while his escape from instant death was considered at the time to be marvellous.

During the same spring adventurous men stopped

at Miles Canyon and acted as pilots for the hundreds of crafts that were taken through, and afterwards took the boats on through White Horse Rapids. The price for pilotage was ordinarily four pounds (or twenty dollars).

A tramway, having for rails long poles about eight inches in diameter, was built during the same summer from the head of Miles Canyon to the foot of White Horse Rapids, a distance of about five miles, and freight that the owners did not care to risk in the canyon and the rapids was drawn in waggons having wheels with concave surfaces by horses over the route. Another tramway has since been constructed on the opposite bank.

The water between the canyon and White Horse Rapids is swift and treacherous, and it took much hard work to navigate the boat safely between the more dangerous rocks. In about ten minutes after leaving the canyon we saw red signals of danger dotting the left bank of the stream, so we hastily made a landing and proceeded on foot to view White Horse Rapids, and compare it with the turbulent waters we had just left.

White Horse Rapids extends for, perhaps, half a mile, but the most dangerous place is the pitch that lies at the extreme lower end, having a total length of but a few hundred feet. This last pitch is the narrowest part of the river, and is so filled with sunken rocks that the journey through it, especially at low water, is extremely perilous. It is impossible to obtain accurate information regarding the number of deaths by drown-

ing in these rapids in the last ten years, but this has been estimated at fifty, a considerable proportion of which occurred during the spring and summer of 1898. In early years the attempt was frequently made to shoot these rapids, but so many accidents resulted that the miners afterwards carried their supplies round on the trail, and lowered their boats with lines, carrying them round the last pitch.

We shot through White Horse Rapids on the morning following the day that we went through Miles Canyon, but one of our number, who preferred to walk round rather than to go through in the boat, got a substitute, an excellent man, who had successfully steered two boats through the rapids on the preceding day, to take his place.

We started about daylight, swinging the little boat well out in the middle of the current and rowing it through the upper rapids, round a bend, and then made for the final pitch, much after the fashion of a race-horse coming down the stretch. The boat was rocked and tossed about on the waves, but the man at the helm, who was a thorough river man, had little difficulty in striking the highest swells of the final pitch, a course that was considered the safest to follow.

When the rushing waters caught the boat and plunged it down in the trough between the swells, and then carried it up until it fairly seemed to leave the water, clouds of spray and splashes of water came over the sides, and in the twinkling of an eye we were safely through the worst of it, and the little craft was headed for a quiet eddy, as proudly as an ocean greyhound

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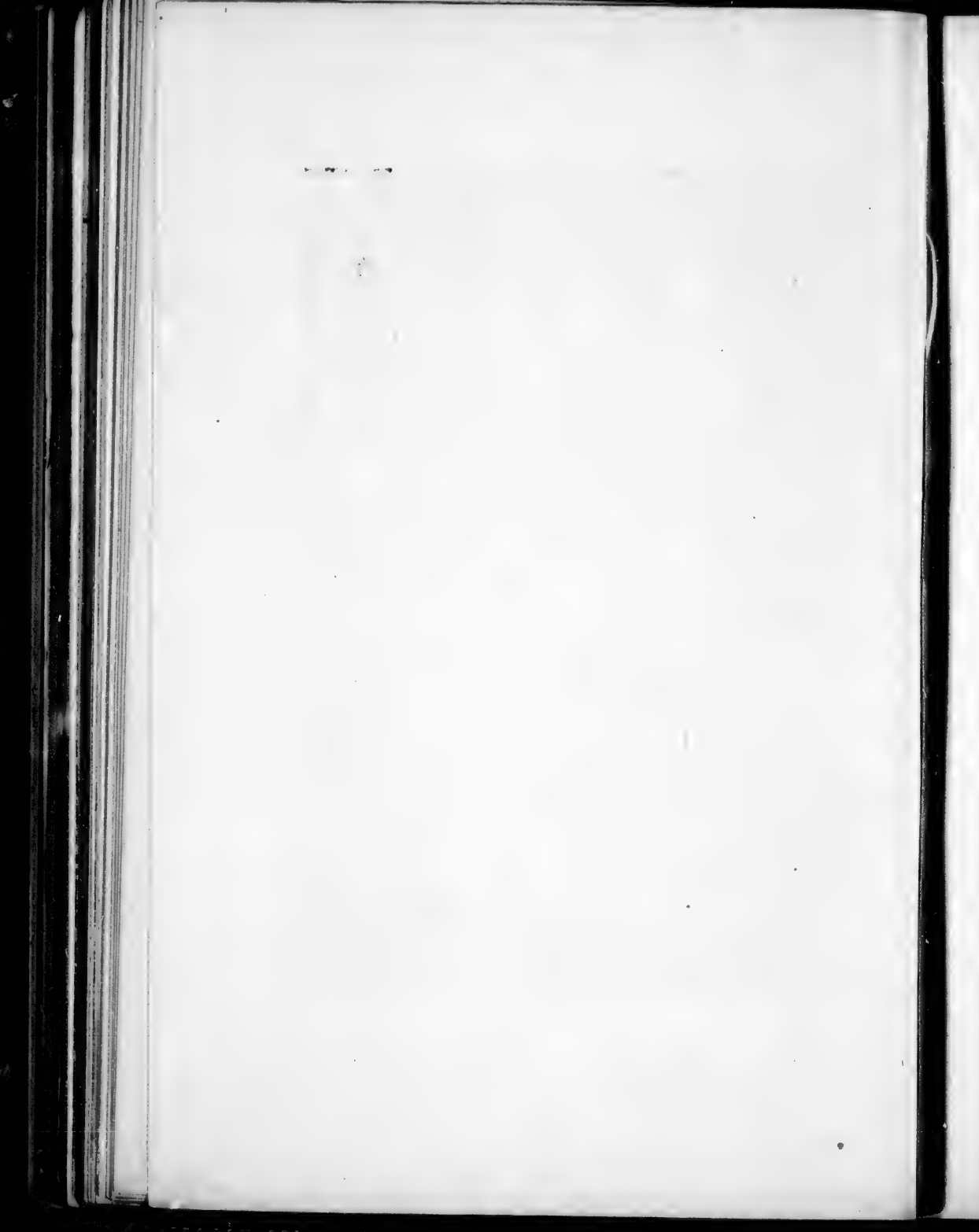
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SHOOTING THE WHITE HORSE RAPIDS



leaves the ways to seek a resting-place in a placid sea.

We realised the proximity of dangerous rocks as we went through the last pitch, but so great was our speed and so violent were the plunging and tossing that we were unable to discern them through the turbulent water. Just as the boat was about to enter this treacherous stretch, after it had been got into the desired position for shooting through, our helmsman, following the usual custom, nodded a signal, and we instantly hoisted our oars out of the water, realising that they were useless in that seething, boiling mass, and fearing that the waves might catch them and so whirl the boat out of her course that she would be dashed against the rocks.

The rocks in this last pitch can be seen during low stages of water, and they have been the cause of more wrecks and of the loss of more human lives than any other rocks on the upper river route. The boats that are not so steered that they will cross this last pitch in the centre are usually badly broken by the force of the contact, and the occupants find themselves struggling in the waves. The day before we shot through, an old man and a boy had had their boat wrecked in the rapids. The boy succeeded in reaching the shore, but the father disappeared down the river, clinging to the keel of the overturned boat. The boy followed along the river bank, but I could not learn what had been the fate of the father or what had become of the boy.

In the following spring a scow belonging to the owner of an El Dorado mining claim struck on the

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rocks in White Horse Rapids and rapidly filled with water. The occupants of the boat, two men, a woman, and some children, were thrown into the water, but they all managed to hold on to the wreck until they were taken off by a rescuing party. But this occurrence was one of a hundred, and, unlike many others,



WRECKED IN THIRTY-MILE RIVER

caused no loss of life. A boat containing three men was once wrecked in White Horse Rapids and all the occupants were drowned.

When we had carried round the rapids the provisions we had left at the landing above, we continued our journey in a blinding snow-storm to Lake Le Barge, a beautiful sheet of water thirty-one miles long and surrounded by high granite mountains. This

lake was named after a man who had visited it in the sixties as an *employé* of the Western Union Telegraph Company, which was then building a telegraph line up the North-West Coast with the intention of crossing the Behring Sea to Asia and then extending the line to Europe. These operations, however, were brought to a sudden close by the successful laying of the Atlantic Cable, though not till after great expense had been incurred.

After crossing Lake Le Barge without incident we began the descent of Thirty-Mile River, a stream that contains dangerous rocks in places, while in others it is quite easy to navigate. But when the water is low Thirty-Mile River is especially dreaded by the Klondikers, because of one rock in particular that can scarcely be seen as it is approached, and upon which probably a hundred boats have been wrecked. At other places the current is very swift, and at low water the stream is considered quite dangerous to navigate. A small steamer that had been built on the upper lakes was wrecked in Thirty-Mile River during the summer of 1898.

The Hootalinqua joins the river at the end of Thirty-Mile, and at this point Captain Jack Crawford, the "poet-scout" of North America, has recently built a cabin for the accommodation of travellers. The Hootalinqua is the outlet of the Lake Teslin route, and when we met the waters brought down by it we could hear a grinding sound on the bottom of our boat caused by the particles of sand carried in suspension by the heavily charged river.

Drifting along a stream that now had considerable size we passed the mouths of Big and Little Salmon rivers, buying moose meat from the Indians encamped there, until one day we reached Five Finger Rapids, formed by several immense masses of conglomerate that rise in a most picturesque manner out of the river, somewhat after the fashion of the fingers of the human hand, a coincidence that needs a stretch of the imagination to realise, but is nevertheless the reason for the peculiar name. These rapids are neither formidable nor dangerous, and a boat of any size can pass safely through any one of the channels, although the right one in going down is nearly always chosen. I have never heard of any casualties at Five Fingers, and I believe that there have been none.

A hour after passing Five Fingers we came to Rink Rapids, which have been formed by a barrier of rocks running diagonally across the channel. We heard the ceaseless roar of these rapids for nearly a mile before we saw them. We kept close to the right bank and passed through very easily. There was absolutely no danger at this spot, and I have since seen steamers, scows, and small boats go through at any point, when the water was at a good stage, without the slightest damage.

After floating a distance of sixty miles we reached Fort Selkirk, at the mouth of the Pelly, and stopped for an hour to look about the settlement and visit the Indian camp. There was a little trading-post at the fort—the fort was burned in 1852 and never rebuilt—and the lone white man who had lived in that isolated

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place for years asked us upon our arrival to add our names to the long register that had been in use since the beginning of the stampede to Klondike. Our names raised the total to 2656, and it was interesting to note the different countries and the different States of the Union that appeared on the list. This total, of course, does not include the names of all the men



A WINTER SCENE

who went to the gold-fields at that time, because many boats had passed the trading-post without stopping.

In this little trading-post there were great packs of skins of fox, bear, and beaver that had been exchanged by the members of the camp of Pelly Indians for the red calico and various-coloured beads that composed the stock of the store. The trader evidently feared that provisions would be scarce in Dawson during the

coming winter, and that some of the travellers would expect to get provisions while on their way to the sea-coast from him ; so he had posted a notice on the cabin which read : " Travellers are warned that they can get no provisions at this post at any time this winter, but dog-feed, in the form of offal, may be had in quantities. There has not been a steamer up the river to this post with supplies for three years."

We went among the cabins of the Indians near the trading-post and bought some moose-hide moccasins. The bucks of the tribe were all away in the hills hunting game, while the squaws and children sat about the floors of the cabins making moccasins, fur caps, and mittens to sell to the travellers. Along the river bank we saw wooden boxes, that were built on posts, to hold the remains of the tribe's dead. Stray snow-shoes, birch-bark toboggans, and Yukon sleds were thrown in a careless manner on the roofs of the cabins, and the camp was infested by a band of half-starved Indian dogs.

We floated on, camping at night where there was a convenient landing-place and where there was plenty of dry wood for our fires. We nearly always had to scrape away drifts of snow before we could pitch the tent, but occasionally we were fortunate enough to stop at a place where men had camped before, and we were saved the additional trouble of clearing away the snow or cutting quantities of pine boughs for our beds. The river became wider and wider after passing each new tributary ; the islands became more numerous, and we had extreme difficulty in avoiding

the many sand-bars and "blind channels." The snow covered the hill-sides, and ice had formed along the banks, making it almost impossible for the steersman to look ahead and distinguish one channel from another. If we took the wrong course shallow water would be encountered, and there would be no end of trouble before the boat found its way again into the right channel. The water was unusually rapid, and the effect of this was to wear away the islands, upon which grew an abundance of magnificent pines. When these trees became undermined they would lean out and hang over the water in a way that threatened the boats uncomfortably. The miners called these trees "sweepers."

We encountered one sand-bar that gave us considerable trouble, but this was the only instance where we struck on the entire journey. In crossing a "cut-off" channel the boat ran on a sunken bar that could not previously be seen because there were no surface indications that a hidden bar existed. We got out, pushed the boat along until the swift current caught and was whirling it from our grasp, when the two men jumped in, a feat I was unable to imitate because I had been suddenly jerked into deep water. I caught the bow of the boat, but was unable to draw myself up, owing to the great weight of my clothing and rubber boots, the latter having filled with water. The two men were unable to pass the mast to come to my aid for fear of capsizing the narrow boat, so the only recourse they had was to row across the river with me clinging to the bow. I was considerably

exhausted after this experience, but after a change of clothing I resumed my journey.

When we reached Stewart River, eighty miles from Dawson, we were met by a great volume of heavy ice which came pouring out into the river in so thick a stream that we were scarcely able to make our way through it. There was quite a camp on an island near the mouth of the Stewart, many of the men remaining there all the winter for the purpose of prospecting for gold on its tributaries.

The weather grew considerably colder, the ice became thicker, and the snow continued to fall. We drifted on with the ice and camped about sixty miles below the mouth of the Stewart. About ten o'clock the next day (October 16) we rounded a bend and saw a town situated on the right bank. Hundreds of tents and cabins could be seen, and men were hurrying in every direction. We passed the mouth of the Klondike, chopped a berth in the shore-ice, and that night we slept in Dawson—the newest thing in mining camps and the centre of interest of the whole world.



DEAD IN THE SNOW

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SUSPENSION BRIDGE OVER KLONDIKE RIVER

CHAPTER IV

Town-site of Dawson—Condition of the Site before Gold was Discovered—Staking out Town Lots and Erecting the First Building—The Gambling and Dance Halls—Description of the Interior of a Saloon—The Gambling Games—Primitive Theatres—Stories—The Main Street of Dawson—Dawson Cabins—Methods of Obtaining Light—Law and Order—Gold Dust as a Circulating Medium—Brass Filings for Gold Dust—Methods of Transporting Gold—The Hospitals—Funerals in Dawson—Deaths on the Trail—Sewage System of Dawson—The Fever Epidemics.

WHERE the Klondike joins the Yukon, a bench of varying width has been formed that gradually increases in elevation and slope as it reaches from the river to the mountainous region towards the east, and upon

this flat stretch of ground has been built the town of Dawson. Across the Yukon is a high mountain that shuts out the view to the west, and the only openings to the little river basin are the valleys made by the two rivers. Across the Klondike a few stores and perhaps a hundred cabins form a little settlement that the original settlers have been pleased to call Klondike City. (Another suburb of Dawson is located a short distance up the Klondike under the name of "Portland Addition," while still another newer one is making its appearance on the opposite banks of the Yukon as West Dawson.) After a life of about two years the town and its suburbs have an estimated population of from twenty to twenty-five thousand people. (1898)

In early days the Indians pitched temporary summer camps on the present site of Dawson while they were making the annual harvest of salmon which usually ascended the Klondike in great numbers. It was their custom to name a river from some circumstance or condition that appealed to them as being worthy of note. The mighty Yukon, for instance, is called the "River of Never Know What," because it is fitful in its spring moods, the ice breaking at any time, and raising the water to such a height that it floods the Indian camps along the banks. The currents are sometimes noisy and turbulent, sometimes quiet and peaceful. And the Klondike, being plentiful in its supply of salmon, is called by the Indians "Thron-Diuk," which means "River of Fish." The miners first learned this name from the Indians, and mispronounced it "Klondike," as it is now generally

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WAITING FOR NEWS IN DAWSON

called, although the Government officials in Dawson continue to use the spelling "Thron-Diuk" in official documents.

When the first stampede arrived after Carmac had spread the news of the gold strike among the miners at Forty Mile, the new comers abandoned their canoes



NEW ARRIVALS

and poling-boats along the river bank of this little Indian settlement and hastened up Bonanza Creek to the point where gold had just been discovered. And when other stampeders arrived from Circle City and other lower-river points, tents appeared along what is now the main street of Dawson, and the little mining camp upon which the eyes of the world would soon be turned had its birth. It was only a matter of a few weeks before the representatives of the Alaska Commercial Company and the North American Transporta-

tion and Trading Company, trade rivals in the Yukon country, and practically the successors of the Hudson Bay Company, came from the older settlements and staked out corner lots preparatory to erecting log buildings to serve as general stores. Then the river steamers crept up for three or four hundred miles between the sand-bars and unknown currents of the upper river, bringing with them the stock-in-trade that had been left behind by the company agents in their mad rush to secure good locations in the camp of the new El Dorado. Captain Constantine of the North-West Mounted Police left his station at Forty-Mile Post to stake a Government reserve in Dawson, and, some time later, withdrew nearly all the police from Forty Mile and began the erection of log barracks. Saloon men and small traders took possession of the lots along the water front, and, during the first summer of Dawson's existence, gambling-rooms and dance-halls were conducted in large tents brought from the lower-river posts for the purpose.

The method of staking lots is practically the same as that of staking a mining claim, but few people realised at the time that the ground which then had little value would soon be worth hundreds of pounds (or thousands of dollars) a corner lot. Government engineers, who were engaged at the time of the discovery of gold on Bonanza Creek in determining the point of intersection of the International boundary line between Alaska and the Canadian North-West with the Yukon River, hastened to the scene, and, after laying out several streets for Dawson to grow along, surveyed all the

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STAKING OUT TOWN LOTS

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claims of El Dorado and Bonanza Creeks, so that the miners had no more ground than the laws of the territory allowed. The miners, about that time, named the new camp "Dawson," in honour of Dr. Dawson, a geologist in the service of the Canadian Government. Having begun its career in this manner, the camp grew



KLONDIKE RIVER IN SUMMER

rapidly in every possible direction, until it now covers a large area of ground. The building of cabins, however, was greatly retarded by the action of certain speculators, who, realising the possible rapid growth of the camp, staked out various additions, usually in the most favoured sections of the town-site, and then hastened to the Canadian capital at Ottawa to make official application for grants to these sections. During the pendency of these applications miners

and other *bonâ-fide* settlers were cautioned not to erect cabins on these additions, because, if the applicants were successful in Ottawa, they could either seize the improvements made by the miners or order them to move the cabins to other localities. This state of uncertainty existed for many months, to the great detriment of the growth of the town and the personal disadvantage of the miners, but to the financial advantage of the speculators, who were nearly always successful in their dealings at Ottawa.

The gambling- and dance-halls in Dawson, together with the theatres, which were sometimes run in connection, were always places of interest to the new arrival. When I first reached Dawson these were thronged during the evenings with miners who had practically no other place to go to. The general stores were always closed at night, and if a miner had an appointment with another, or if a broker had business with the driver of a dog-team that was soon to start for the coast, the most convenient place for meeting was the saloon, which in most cases had a gambling-room and a dance-hall attached.

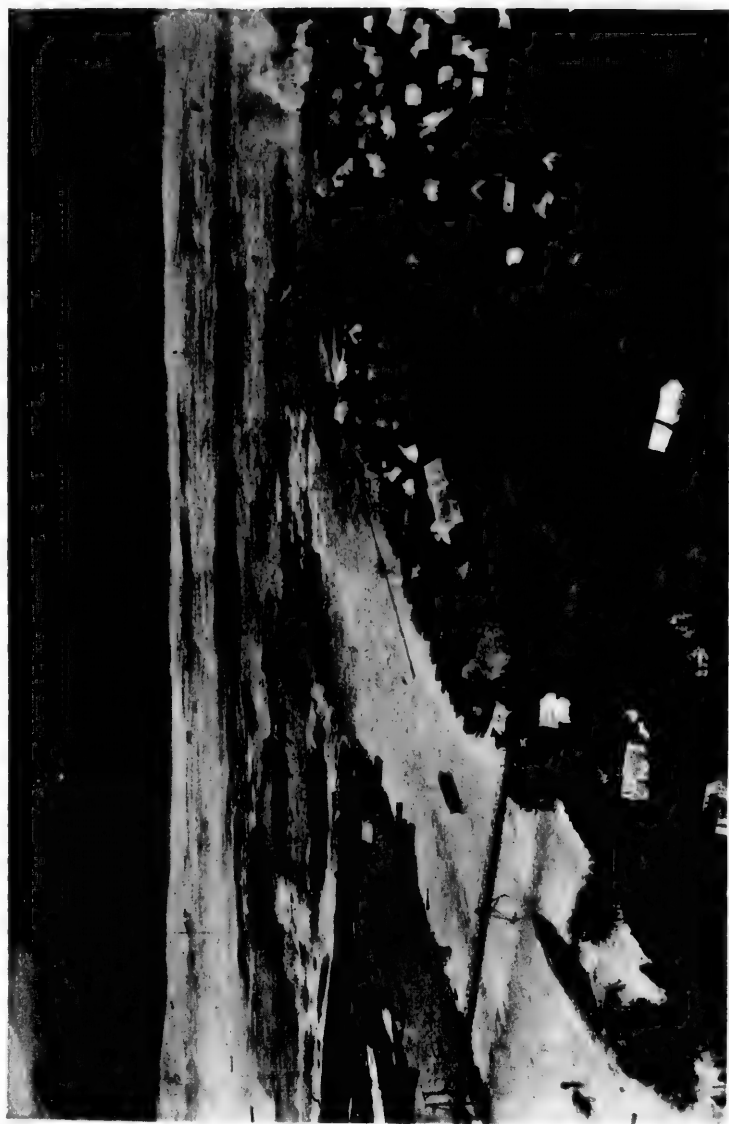
The crowds were greater at that time of the year, because there were hundreds of late comers whose only means of getting information concerning claims and leases lay in going about among the miners in the different saloons, and also because the miners were busy freighting their winter provisions to the claims, and were usually forced to spend every other night in Dawson. These crowds were exceptionally cosmopolitan in their make-up, and I believe it would have

been possible at any time, and in any saloon or dance-hall, for one to have picked from the crowd either a crew to take a ship to sea or one to run a railway train. And there were doctors enough to attend these crews after they were selected, lawyers to settle their disputes, bank clerks to care for their money, and undertakers to bury them if death overtook them. There were men from every walk of life, all of whom had been attracted to the cold, dreary North by the greed for gold—the strongest of magnets.

These men, upon their arrival in camp, were in a certain state of bewilderment, and very few seemed to know what to do after they were once there. Months of work, privations, and hardships had been the cost of admission, and yet, after they had gone safely through it all and reached the common Mecca, many wondered why they had come.

There was a certain peculiarity about these public places that could never fail to impress even the most ordinary observer, but whether this was due to the fact that one was always in a typical mining-camp atmosphere, the strange, rather unusual, manner of dress and habits of the northern miner, or the peculiar methods of transacting business and the dealings over the bars and the gambling tables, I cannot say. In any event, Dawson had a certain originality about it, especially in winter, that was peculiarly its own, and one that undoubtedly had its beginning and had been fostered in the early mining camps of Circle City and Forty-Mile Post, where the miners were even in a greater state of isolation than they ever were in Dawson.

The saloons and dance-halls, during the first two winters in Dawson, were built almost entirely of logs, and, although these buildings were quite large, they were seldom more than two stories high. The Pioneer Saloon, which for the greater part of the winter of 1897-98 had no gambling-rooms annexed, was the place of rendezvous for the old Circle City men, who gathered there because the proprietors had formerly been fellow-miners in the Alaskan town. The interior of this place was beautified somewhat by the addition of a mirror of considerable size, which at that time was one of the sights of Dawson, for mirrors were scarcer than gold. The interior walls and the space over the door on the outside of the building were hung with numerous pairs of moose and caribou antlers. There were no wall papers or fine-grained woods to be had, and the hewn logs in the rough state could be seen in the roof of the building as well as the walls. The bar was made of planed boards and stained with a red dye, while on the shelves, upon which had been bestowed a generous amount of the same colouring matter, were rows of bottles containing liquor. A pair of gold scales adorned one end of the bar, and whenever a miner bought a drink or a cigar, either one of which cost four shillings (or a dollar), he tossed his gold sack to the bar-tender, who would weigh out the proper amount of gold dust and then return the sack to the owner. During the early part of the winter referred to, some enterprising men erected at great expense a building containing a saloon and gambling-hall in front, and a theatre in the rear



VIEW FROM THE HILL AT BACK OF DAWSON, SHOWING KLONDIKE RIVER
AND PART OF YUKON RIVER

that was turned into a dance-hall after the evening play was over. The miners and the hundreds of new comers usually crowded this place to the walls, and one often had great difficulty in elbowing a way through the throng. The theatre, which was necessarily quite a burlesque on the English and American institution, was often filled to its seating capacity, the charge for admission seldom exceeding four shillings (or one dollar). The games that found most favour with the miners were faro, roulette, craps, black-jack, and poker, but faro was more universally played. These gambling places were often crowded even when the dance-halls were deserted, and the faro tables in particular were always surrounded by men busily watching the successive turns of the cards. Around the walls of these places could be seen numerous roulette wheels and craps tables, but these games were not so heavily patronised as faro.

Faro depends entirely upon the turn of a card, which may either come first or second from a box in which the pack is concealed. On the table in front of the card-box are painted imitations of the thirteen cards of a suit. If the chips are laid "open" on a single card by the player and the card comes second from the box, the player wins, but if the card is shown on the first turn he loses. The order of this may be reversed by the player "coppering" the table card with a little black "copper" kept for the purpose.

In roulette a marble is whirled around a circular groove until the force becomes so weak that it drops into a wheel which revolves in the opposite direction

and carries numerous pockets, each one of which is numbered. There are corresponding numbers on the table, and if the player has his gold dust on the winning number, or on one of a combination, he wins, otherwise he loses.

Craps is a game played with dice, and has more chances against the player and in favour of the game-keeper. Black-jack is a game played with cards, and is known sometimes as "twenty-one." Poker is too generally known to need description.

When the miners play against the games they hand their gold sacks to the dealer, who gives them as many stacks of chips as they want, charging the amount against the sack. When the player quits the game he "cashes in" by giving back whatever chips he has, and then, if he has won, subtracts the amount originally advanced him. His winnings, or losses, are marked down on a piece of paper by the dealer, and then the miner takes this and his gold sack to the cashier, who either takes out or weighs in dust according to whether the player has won or lost.

The gamblers in Dawson have led lives of varying success, and many of them have made and lost fortunes. I knew of one instance that occurred during one of Dawson's earlier winters, of where a gambler, who had sold a claim for three thousand pounds (or fifteen thousand dollars), lost it all at the faro tables in a few nights' play. A story is told of a gambler who borrowed forty pounds (or two hundred dollars), and, after playing all night, won eight hundred pounds (or four thousand dollars). He repaid the amount he had borrowed,

returned to the tables, and then lost all his winnings. Two miners once played a game of poker for a claim worth about two thousand pounds (or ten thousand dollars), and when one had lost and the other had won, the loser made out the papers as he had previously agreed to do, and seemed to consider the matter of very little moment.

Gambling is carried on more extensively in Dawson than it would be if the camp were not so wholly isolated from the civilised world. But under the existing conditions, where the men are shut in from all outside communication, without daily newspapers, theatres, and other things to attract their attention, they patronise the gambling tables merely to occupy their mental faculties, rather than for the sake of the small financial gains they may make. The games are always quiet and orderly, and there is seldom any trouble between the dealer and the player; and there are certainly no instances where shooting affrays have occurred, as they commonly have in other places.

A few nights after my arrival in Dawson I visited the theatre, which, for a week or more, had been advertising a grand opening by means of home-made posters made by daubing black paint on sheets of wrapping paper. The programme was of a Vaudeville nature, and included half a dozen song-and-dance "artists," a clog dancer, a wrestling match, and, I believe, a boxing match between Jim Slavin, an old-time-fighter, and Pat Rooney, a Canadian. The interior of the little theatre was crowded to the walls with an audience composed almost entirely of men

dressed in gaudily coloured Mackinaw clothes and fur coats and caps. The orchestra consisted of a piano, a violin and a flute, and the footlights were tallow candles, whose faint light was reinforced by oddly shaped reflectors made from stray bits of tin. The low ceiling was of hewn logs, and the walls on either



FLOODS DURING SPRING FRESHETS

side were lined with boxes, to which the miners could gain admission by paying double the price for liquors and cigars. The stage was a narrow affair, and very little space intervened between the blue denim drop curtain and the back wall of the building.

The play began at the conclusion of a medley of popular airs by the orchestra, and during the ensuing performance the audience shouted and cheered at the

men and women on the stage, all of whom seemed to appreciate the laughable burlesqueness of the thing, and made it seem all the more ridiculous by lending extra colour and energy to their individual efforts. The programme was concluded with the prize fight, which was quite naturally decided by the referee to be a draw, this being the only realistic event of the whole performance. While the show was going on, one of the song-and-dance artists, who enjoyed considerable popularity with the miners, was encored heavily upon singing one of the latest songs, and the miners attested their enthusiasm by greeting her with a shower of nuggets thrown on the stage.

One of the proprietors of the place mounted the footboards when the performance had ended, and announced that as soon as the hall could be cleared of the wooden benches that had served as seats, a dance would take place, to which every one was invited. The audience moved slowly out into the gambling-room, the benches were piled along the walls, and the music struck up a lively waltz. The women who had performed on the stage, and others who were employed by the management to dance with the miners, went among the little groups of men who stood about the floor and along the walls asking them to dance. In a few moments the floor was crowded with a whirling, animated throng of men and women, the men making a curiously striking appearance in their furs and moccasins and bright-coloured Mackinaw suits. The women were dressed in ordinary English and American costumes. The ease and grace with which many of

the miners danced were rather surprising, their activity being due to the manner of life led by them, and, in a great measure, to the lightness and flexibility of their moccasins and muck-lucks.

At the conclusion of the dance the couples promenaded to the bar, where the men drank liquor or smoked cigars, and then handed their gold sacks to the cashier behind the bar, who weighed out four shillings (or one dollar), in payment for the liquor and the privilege of the waltz. The women were given a check, which would afterwards be cashed by the management for a shilling (or twenty-five cents), and in addition to this each one was paid a weekly salary varying from two to ten pounds (or ten to fifty dollars). The women in the dance-halls were always well behaved, and the ribald scenes and shocking familiarity that are popularly supposed to occur in Dawson dance-halls never take place. Those who would see these things must go to cities of the older and more "civilised" countries.

By the time the dancers returned from the bar the caller would be shouting, "Well, where is all them good waltzers? Grab a girl, you fellows, and take a spin roun'," and other pressing invitations hard to resist. The music would probably begin with a polka, and there would soon be witnessed the lively spectacle of a few moments before. Then the floor manager would call for a square dance, and the miners who were unable to solve the mysteries of the mazy waltz were given an opportunity to gyrate. The square dances were always animated and full of life, but the

enthusiasm of the dancers never led them beyond the bounds of common propriety.

A masquerade ball was given in the Opera House on Thanksgiving Eve, and during the early hours of the following morning, when dances customarily came to an end, the building caught fire, and, before the headway of the flames could be checked, it and several log buildings adjoining were totally destroyed. The temperature was excessively low, and there was no water with which to fight the fire, so the miners were forced to blow up the neighbouring buildings with powder to avoid further devastation. Much gold dust was lost during the fire by the occupants of the buildings, and, later in the year, when the weather moderated slightly, several men found profitable employment in shovelling the *débris* into tubs of water and washing out the gold and the iron nails that had been buried at the time of the fire. The nails were rusted, but in May and June they were worth fourteen shillings (or three and a half dollars) a pound.

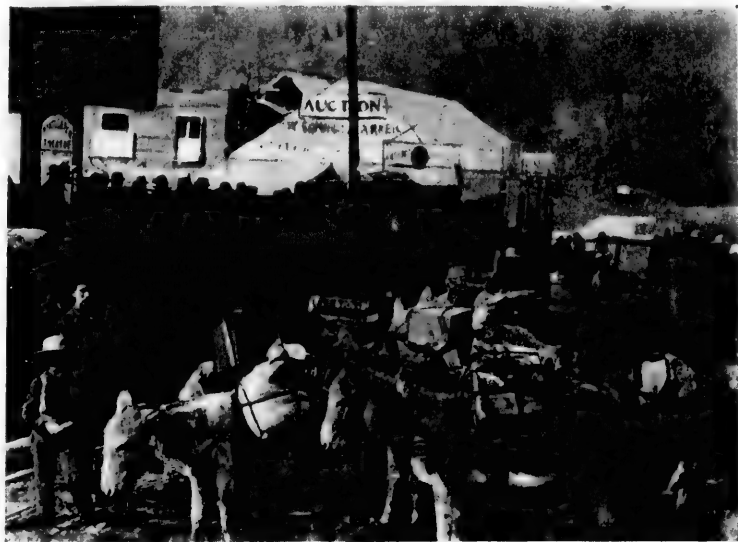
With the disappearance of the Opera House other dance-halls and small theatres sprang up, so that by the middle of the following summer there were six or eight places of this description, and four or five of them had theatres in connection. Some of the buildings were of logs, others were made of boards, and several were walled in with nothing more substantial than cloth. The price of admission to the theatres after the Opera House was destroyed was two shillings (or fifty cents), and this first included a drink of liquor at the bar. There was never any charge for admission to the dance-halls.

The gold miners have frequently come into fortunes so easily and with so little physical or mental exertion that they have failed to appreciate the wealth that suddenly became theirs. Several men whom prosperity has ruined have squandered fortunes in the dance-halls, and have been left high and dry on the rocky beach of destitution. Among these was a young man who spent four thousand pounds (or twenty thousand dollars) in the dance-halls in about five months. He had been successful in staking a rich claim on El Dorado Creek, which he had sold for that amount of money before he realised the true value of the property. When he got possession of the money, this man spent all his time dancing in the different halls, and made no effort so long as the money lasted to save any portion of it or to secure additional wealth. When he had spent his last shilling he went to work for a miner at the forks of El Dorado and Bonanza Creeks at day wages, and he was still employed there in October 1898.

Another unfortunate sold a half-interest in a claim in Hunker Creek for six thousand pounds (or thirty thousand dollars), and spent the first payment of six hundred pounds (or three thousand dollars) in the dance-halls. Then he mortgaged his interest in the gravel dumps on the claim, and finally accepted three thousand pounds (fifteen thousand dollars) for the remaining amount, and squandered it all as he had the first payment.

The main street of Dawson presents a curious spectacle, especially in the winter-time, and one that is not

easily forgotten. Log cabins, frame buildings, and tents made of canvas and variously coloured cloth occupy either side of the main street, usually in more or less confusion, and the streets themselves are often crowded with men and dog-teams hurrying in all directions, either to escape the cold or to attend to



LEAVING DAWSON FOR THE MINES

pressing business. The buildings in winter are covered with snow and ice, and the spaces above the doorways are always coated with heavy frost. The only noises that can be heard are the shouts of the dog-drivers, the thumping sound of moccasined feet on the board walks, and the nerve-harrowing squeakings of the door-hinges.

The cabins that cover the greater part of the town-

site and dot the surrounding mountains are built usually on the same simple design, but their construction is always attended with considerable difficulty. The demand for cabin logs has been so great that they now have to be drawn many miles over the snow or floated down the rivers in summer, and then dragged through the streets with horses or dogs. The ordinary Dawson cabin usually has inside measurements of fourteen or sixteen feet in length and twelve or fourteen in breadth, although, of course, they all vary more or less one from another. It is customary to allow the roof poles to extend over the front of the cabin, and then to build a *cache* for provisions by erecting poles from the roof to the ground. Often the roofs of the cabins, and sometimes the floors, are made of slabs supplied by the saw-mills at sevenpence (about fifteen cents) apiece. The floors, however, are sometimes made by laying small poles and then levelling them off on the upper side with an axe or an adze. Bunks are erected in one end of the cabin, a table, made perhaps of two narrow boards, is built against the wall beneath the window, and an old sugar-barrel is placed in the corner to hold the ice, pieces of which are thawed from time to time to furnish water for cooking. The small Yukon stove is set up in one corner of the cabin, shelves and hooks are fixed for the accommodation of dishes and cooking utensils, and, when the few stools and benches are made, the furniture of the cabin is practically complete.

To secure the proper amount of light in winter has occasioned a considerable display of genius on the

part of the cabin-dwellers in Dawson, because there has nearly always been a shortage of window glass in the camp. When a great many cabins were being built in 1897 there was absolutely no glass to be had, and the men found substitutes in oiled paper, white cloths, and white-glass bottles, the latter making a very excellent window. The necks of the bottles, which had originally contained ginger-ale and had been thrown away by the bar-keepers, were first removed by heating a rim round the neck with a candle flame, and then plunging them into a bucket of cold water. Then the bottles were placed in a little wooden rack to hold them in place, and the crevices between them were stuffed solid with moist moss. This rack was placed in the wall of the cabin from which a portion of the log had previously been removed. It was found that these bottle windows frosted less and admitted more light during the darkest and coldest days, sizes being equal, than the ordinary pane, which was nearly always thickly coated with frost and ice.

The artificial light for night use emanated from candles or the grease light, although a few of the more fortunate miners had coal oil-lamps. There was a great scarcity of candles, and they frequently sold in the streets for four shillings (or one dollar) apiece—a circumstance rendering it imperative for most of the inhabitants to resort to the grease light. These lights were usually made by taking the lid of a baking-powder can and fastening a strip of tin across the top to support the wick, which was often nothing but a stray rag. Then the grease from the pan in which

bacon had been fried was poured into the lid, and a light almost equal to that of a candle would be the result. In the morning the grease in the lid would be hard, and we had to melt it over a fire before we could have light.

In the summer-time the cabins are so light, even at midnight, that it is sometimes difficult to sleep, and the windows have to be darkened by using blankets for curtains. It was equally difficult at times to keep out the myriads of mosquitos that occasionally made life almost unendurable.

The cabins are often difficult to keep warm when the logs are still green, but when they become seasoned throughout they are comfortable enough as long as the fire is kept burning in the sheet-iron stove. But during the cold nights the temperature suffers a radical change and it will usually be found necessary to thaw the ice in the water-bucket before breakfast can be prepared in the morning. The miners always rely upon the Yukon stoves to furnish heat for the cabin; stone fire-places are never built because of the difficulty in procuring rock of a suitable quality. The rent that a cabin like the ones just described will command in Dawson is rather surprising, and it is not an uncommon thing for a tenant to pay twenty pounds (or a hundred dollars) a month rent. Two-storey log buildings sometimes rent for sixty pounds (or three hundred dollars) a month.

The monotony of cabin life in the winter is sometimes broken by the appearance of little field-mice of a species that abounds in great numbers, and occa-

sionally these little visitors are on very friendly terms with the miners. Two that lived somewhere beneath the bunks in my own cabin were quite tame even on their first appearance, and with a little coaxing they afterwards ate from my hand and ran about the cabin without the least fear of being molested.

Great black ravens that scarcely seem to notice the extreme cold fly through the frosty air of winter, making a peculiar rushing sound with their wings. These birds apparently cover great distances, and one that was noticed in particular during an earlier winter would make daily trips from the forks of the El Dorado to Dawson, where it went evidently with the intention of gathering its meals. The ravens do not migrate, but remain in the North throughout the severest of weather. The raven and the little starling, which lives on the mountain summits in summer and comes down to the valleys in winter to shiver on a protected twig beneath a mass of snow held in check by a branch above, are the only birds, excepting the game birds, that one ever sees or hears for eight long, dreary months.

There has been very little law-breaking in Dawson because of the exceptional degree of intelligence of the miners, and because the offenders, who are nearly always caught, are dealt with so summarily by the police that the fear of punishment acts as an effectual damper on evil intentions. One would naturally expect that the type of men found in a new mining camp would border on the desperado; but this is certainly not the case in Dawson, and a man is infinitely safer walking at midnight along the streets of Dawson than

he is on the Victoria Embankment, London, or Broadway, New York. There have been a few instances of robbery in the mines, but the offences have always been committed by adventurers who have found their way into the Klondike, and not by men who have followed the occupation of mining for any length of time. Another reason advanced for the absence of crime is the fact that the journey to Dawson, up to the present time, has essentially been one of the "survival of the fittest," and ordinarily only men of considerable physical endurance and determination ever reach the mines. The others tire by the wayside and return disgusted to the coast cities, nearly all of which are flooded with degenerate characters of the lowest type.

There are now several hundred women in Dawson, although there were probably not more than a hundred during the winter of 1897-98. One or two of the more adventurous came in over the ice, walking the greater part of the distance of six hundred miles, but the majority came down the river in boats after the ice broke in the spring, or up the river from St. Michael's on the river-steamers. Many of these women are the wives of miners and traders, while the others are the dance-hall sort. The women seem to stand the climate as well as the men—better, in fact, than the men who spend the winter in idleness in the cabins.

The mail service between Dawson and the outside cities was exceptionally poor during the winter of 1897-98. No mail arrived in Dawson between October 12, 1897, and February 28, 1898, and when it did

come it was found to consist of letters written in September and October of the preceding year. This mail was brought to Dawson by the Mounted Police, who used eight sleds and about fifty dogs to transport it. While *en route* one of their number was swept beneath the ice of Thirty-Mile River and drowned, and a sled-load of mail was lost at the same time. During the spring, mails arrived at irregular intervals of three or four weeks. Arrangements have recently been made, however, to improve the system, and it is probable that there will eventually be a weekly mail-service between Skagway and Dawson.

The circulating medium of the camp during the first two years of its life was gold dust and nuggets in the native form, but lately a good deal of currency and silver coin has made its appearance. Gold dust was formerly taken in trade at the stores at the ratio of about three sovereigns nine shillings (or seventeen dollars) an ounce; but a series of assays subsequently showed that this rate was greater than the real value, and it was then reduced four shillings (or one dollar) to the ounce. The assay values of the gold from the different creeks varies considerably, but so much of the trade gold originally came from El Dorado and other creeks where the gold is of a low grade that it is really worth less than the last value. In weighing out a large quantity of crude gold no account is ordinarily taken of the pieces of quartz rock that adhere to the larger nuggets.

Scales and balances of considerable size are in use in the offices of the Commercial Company, and any

amount of money in crude gold can be weighed in a few moments by reference to a type-written list of weights and values. The gold is then poured into a scoop by means of a triangular-shaped "blower" until the scales shift. Every miner has a pair of small scales in his cabin to weigh his prospects in penny-weights and grains, and these are afterwards reduced to dollars and cents.

There is said to have been considerable dishonesty among unscrupulous saloon men during the early winters in Dawson in the weights used by them in weighing the customers' gold. In any event, I know from personal experience that one could never pay more than eighteen pounds' (or ninety dollars') worth of bills with a sack of gold dust containing twenty pounds (or one hundred dollars). It was commonly understood about the camp that ten per cent. of one's gold would disappear in some unaccountable manner while paying it out.

It frequently happens that miners are not as careful as they might be in tying the gold sacks, and a little will be spilled each time on the floor and counters. These stray particles will be swept out into the street in the mornings, and in summer-time the little boys about the camp carry away the dirt in front of the saloon doors and take it to the river to wash out the gold. It sometimes happened that each one of these boys would recover three pounds (or fifteen dollars) a day.

An interesting decision was once rendered in the Courts at Dawson regarding gold as legal tender. A

miner had offered gold dust in payment to another for a certain claim, but the latter had refused to accept it. The case eventually found its way into the Courts, and the Judge decided that the miner was in the right when he declined to accept the dust, because the second miner had not offered legal tender (Canada) for the property.

In the summer of 1898 the police at one time had their attention called to the fact that brass filings had been noticed in the ordinary trade dust in circulation, and an effort was promptly made to find out where these filings came from. After a short investigation it was found that a second-hand dealer who had lately arrived in the camp had quite a generous supply of brass filings mixed with gold dust, which he used in paying bills. The man was arrested, and it was subsequently learned that a quantity of filings had been put in circulation by him which, had it been gold dust, would have had a value of several thousand dollars.

In the springtime, when the gold is being washed from the gravels of the creeks, men and horses and dogs may often be seen in the streets of Dawson carrying sacks of gold from the mines to the local banks, and the sight is one that occurs so often that it now occasions very little comment. The gold is carried in bulk in heavy buckskin sacks, and the weight that can be taken any distance by one man is usually not over fifty pounds. A horse will have little difficulty in travelling along with four times this weight in crude gold, but the sacks are always carefully wrapped in blankets, so that their size is increased, and the gold

will bear on a larger surface. The dogs are made to pack gold in exactly the same manner as other burdens, and twenty or thirty pounds will usually be found to be all a dog can conveniently carry.

I remember an incident that occurred when a miner on upper Bonanza Creek was taking his gold to Dawson with six dogs, all of whom were struggling along with all the weight they could carry. It became necessary on the journey to cross a foot-log that had been thrown across a pool of water. The first five dogs crossed in safety, but the sixth lost his balance and fell with the precious load into the water. After several anxious moments the dog reappeared above the surface, but only for an instant, because the weight of the gold was such that it carried him down again almost immediately. When he came to the surface the second time the miner was in such a position that he could catch the collar and draw the dog to the bank. In some manner, however, the bags containing the gold slipped from the animal and sank to the bottom of the pool. The miner at first was in quite a quandary as to how he could recover his gold, but he finally secured it by means of a long pole and a hook. An avoirdupois pound of gold is worth about fifty-one sovereigns (or two hundred and fifty-five dollars), and the value of the precious metal carried by the unfortunate dog was about eleven hundred and twenty-five sovereigns (or five thousand six hundred dollars).

On a shelf behind the bar in the Yukon Hotel I once saw a number of buckskin sacks that contained nearly forty thousand pounds (or two hundred thou-

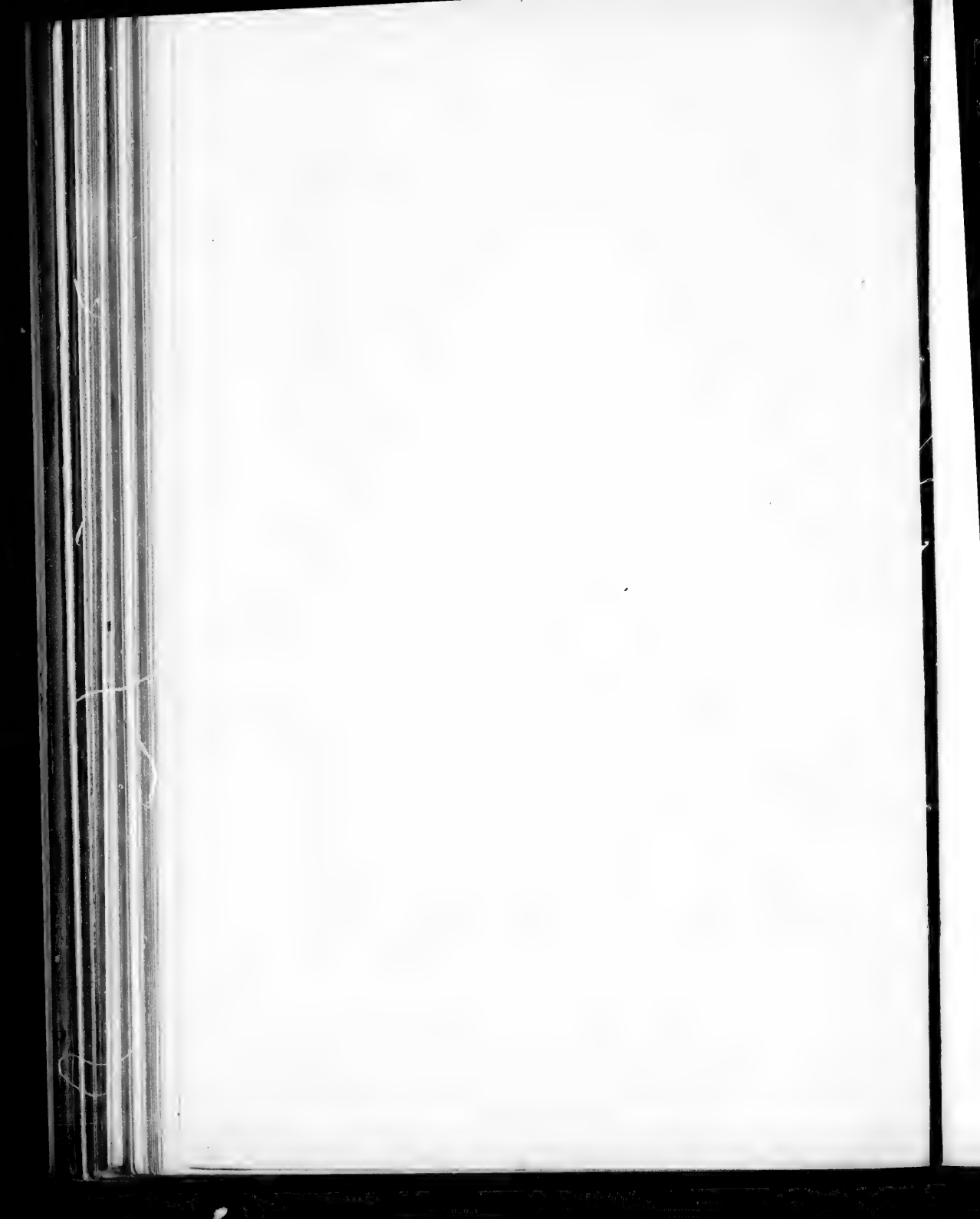
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CLIMBING ROUND BLUFFS



sand dollars) in virgin gold. The precious metal had been brought from claim twenty-nine, El Dorado Creek, and the pack train had arrived too late at night for any other disposition to be made of the money until the following morning. The sacks were piled one on top of the other, and seemingly no more attention was given to them than to other objects in the room. I remember also meeting Alex. McDonald, "King of the Klondike," on the Bonanza Creek Trail one night with twelve men, each one of whom was carrying about sixty pounds of gold that had been taken from the gravel-beds on claim twenty-two, El Dorado. McDonald carried a rifle, and this departure from the ordinary customs of the miners occasioned considerable comment and called forth not a little criticism.

The hospitals of Dawson have done a great deal towards the relief of sick miners and other inhabitants, and many of them owe their lives to the care and attention given them by Father Judge, an excellent man who spent many years working faithfully, without remuneration, among the men of the different mining camps; but in the autumn of 1898 he himself contracted pneumonia and died after a short illness. The North has had but one or two men possessing the qualities of Father Judge, who unselfishly gave his entire time to the sick and poor, seemingly untired in his continued efforts. During the time when provisions were scarce Father Judge had an average of forty patients in the hospital, yet he always managed to keep them supplied with proper food, and

how he accomplished this is more than many men—numbers of whom could scarcely provide for themselves—can tell. The only financial support which Father Judge could rely upon were the donations received at various times and the three ounces of gold paid annually by some of the more prosperous miners, who gave this amount so that in case of sickness they could receive the benefits of the hospital. The great majority of the patients were men who had not kept up these payments, but Father Judge never refused them admittance and the best of medical care and attention while their illness was upon them.

A funeral in Dawson always seemed to enlist more sympathetic feeling from the hundreds, even thousands, of spectators than would be noticeable elsewhere. The fact that one of their number had succumbed to fever in that isolated, rather inhospitable locality, surrounded by strangers—a fate feared by every man there—was the cause of this fellow-feeling, which was everywhere manifest, and this was probably intensified by the primitive methods in which the burials were conducted. The relatives of the deceased were, of course, not present to attend, and it would be a month in any event before they could even learn of the death.

The funeral of a member of the Mounted Police was conducted after the usual form of police burial. A band preceded a cordon of police, following which were Government officials and other citizens. Then came a plain waggon, one of the few in the camp, on which rested a coffin made of rough boards and

wrapped in black cloth. On the coffin were the white gloves that had formerly been worn by the deceased. Immediately behind the waggon a member of the police led a horse that represented the mount belonging to the dead policeman. The riding-boots which had once been worn by him were placed backwards in the stirrups, and the bridle-reins were wrapped with black and white cloth.

The funeral of a miner, or of a late arrival in the camp, was often a very primitive affair, but if the miner was a member of the "Yukon Order of Pioneers" there was always a large attendance. It was a customary sight in winter to see two or three men drawing along the trail a sled upon which rested a coffin, the party, accompanied by a priest, wending its way to the little graveyard on the hill-side behind the town. In summer the funeral waggon often consisted merely of a two-wheeled cart, and in some instances I have seen the coffin borne along on the shoulders of the dead miner's comrades.

The body of men forming the local detachment of Mounted Police are an excellent lot of picked men who have been given considerable freedom by the officers in charge and permitted, as they should be, to join the different stampedes to new creeks to stake mining claims for themselves. Some of these men have fortunately got possession of good claims that will some day be worth a good deal of money. The police, of course, have no horses to ride in the North, and the word "mounted" when used in this connection is somewhat out of place.

Deaths have quite often occurred as a result of the

exposures and exhaustion that men were subjected to when they stampeded to the new creeks.

I believe there were no instances, excepting one, where men were frozen to death while on these journeys, although numerous deaths took place within the first four or five days after the stampedes were over. When Swede Creek, a small tributary of the Yukon, which joins it a short way above Dawson, was stampeded, there was an immense amount of suffering, because mistakes were made in estimating the distance and the time that was necessary in making the trip. In many instances men were forced to spend the nights in the woods without robes or blankets, and others, rather than try to get rest under such difficulties, travelled day and night for several days without stopping and practically without food. No less than four deaths resulted from this one stampede, and many others had long spells of sickness as a direct consequence of the exposure. Stampedes were of common occurrence. Often the news of a discovery on a new creek would be circulated about the saloons and dance-halls after the hour of midnight, and half an hour later men would be seen hurrying through the streets in the direction of the new strike with their blankets strapped to their backs, and provisions to last during the journey. The life of the stampeders was exceptionally hard, because the creeks which they visited had been practically unknown up to that time, and, since there were no cabins anywhere in the vicinity, they were compelled to spend the night on the trail or resting before a fire in the timber.

In summer-time Dawson presents an appearance entirely different from that of the winter. The dance-halls, gambling-rooms, and bars do practically the same amount of business as in the winter months, but the modes of dress and travel have changed, and the town affects a rather foreign air. The crowds frequent the streets rather than the ill-smelling buildings, and the arrival or departure of a steamboat, or the public reading of the last news from the outside cities, particularly the war news of the summer of 1898, is sufficient to cause the gathering of a great crowd.

Dawson has never found time to build a sewerage system, and the filth that accumulates during the long winters and then lies exposed to the decomposing effect of the warm sun in summer is, in great measure, the cause of the prevalence of malarial-typhoid fevers that are epidemic in June, July, August, and even September and October. The gases that arise from the swamps and marshes which occupy a large part of the town-site are equally unhealthy, and an attempt has lately been made to drain the surface-water from these by means of trenches; but the experience of almost every mining camp has been that it is extremely difficult, almost impossible, to interest a floating population in public improvements, and the one desire of the inhabitants is always to work energetically for themselves while they are in camp and to retain every crown or dollar they can save to take to their homes. The ones who have greatly interested themselves in proper sewerage and the establishment of a fire-department have, of course, been the repre-

sentatives of the larger companies and property-holders, whose investments have been such that improvements of this character are almost imperative to secure the safety of the property and to avoid a shrinkage in values.

The epidemic of fever during the summer of 1898 carried away several hundred people, and the death-list of the summer of 1899 will be proportionately large to the increase in population. There were about 5000 people in Dawson during the winter of 1897-98, and during the present winter (1898-99) the population is estimated to be from four to six times as great.



A HARD DAY'S TRAMP

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CHAPTER V

Dawson Threatened with Famine—Failure of River Steamers to Arrive with Provisions—Arrival of Hundreds of Men with Scant Allowance of Supplies—Public Meetings—Departure of Starving Men for Fort Yukon and Skagway, Alaska—Incidents—Fabulous Prices Paid for Food—Street Speculators—Method of Quelling the Famine Scare—Attitude of the Commercial Companies—Arrival of Provisions in the Spring—News from Fort Yukon—Dawson's First Cow—The First Turkey—Other Incidents.

OCTOBER 16, 1897, was a bleak and dreary day in Dawson. The chilling blasts of approaching winter came whirling down the river-valleys, ice was grinding along and gorging the mighty Yukon, and snow was rapidly covering the North with the white mantle of winter. The desperate howling of a hundred native dogs and the persistent screams of the coal-black

ravens flying overhead made the scene still more dismal and uninviting. Hunger threatened the camp, and it was even thought for a time that death would come in the form of starvation.

The two Commercial Companies had strained every effort during the preceding summer to bring to Dawson an adequate supply of provisions to last through the following winter, but they had met with only partial success. The officers of the company were hopeful even until late in September that the three or four overdue steamers would come with additional cargoes, and maybe so swell the stores in the warehouses that there would be a scant plenty for every man and woman in the camp. But only one of these belated steamers, the *P. B. Weare*, reached Dawson, and, when it was unloaded and headed again in the direction of its winter quarters on the lower river, there were many passengers on board who thought this to be their only means of escape from the city of impending famine.

A few days passed, and the condition of affairs seemed to grow even more serious. There was no more hope of adding to the supply already in the warehouses, and hundreds of men were arriving daily from the sea-coast anxious to try their fortune in the mines, but many having so little food that within two or three months they would surely be reduced to want. Slush-ice had made its appearance in the Yukon a week or two before, and the river was now rapidly filling with cakes of greater size and thickness.

About this time Captain Hansen, the agent repre-

senting the Alaska Commercial Company, became alarmed at the existing condition of things, and called public meetings in the street, so that the late arrivals could become acquainted with the true state of affairs, and fully understand the seriousness of the situation. These meetings were held almost every day, and the speakers were wildly dramatic in imploring the men who had scant supplies of provisions to go on down the Yukon, while the river was still unfrozen, to Fort Yukon, where a number of barges laden with provisions lay stranded on the sand-bars. The speakers usually brought their addresses to a close by offering, on behalf of some generous person, the use of various scows and small boats, so that the journey could be undertaken at a few hours' notice, and without the necessity of buying or building boats.

The peculiar position in which many men found themselves at that time was one that will not readily be forgotten. Here they were, in a comparatively strange country that produced nothing upon which they could subsist, amid men to whom they were total strangers, lacking provisions for the winter, which was all but ready to descend upon them in its peculiar suddenness, and with a distance between them and the coast cities where provisions could be had of six hundred dreary miles. They were frightened at the awfulness of the outlook; many of them were totally unable to think or to act for themselves, and they were so affected by the serious condition of affairs that with scarcely an exception they were a sullen and discontented lot.

It was a very common thing in those days of doubt

for one to enter a saloon to find it crowded with solemn-faced, speechless men, who sat or stood about the room apparently dazed by the serious question they had pondered over by day, and over which they spent hours of sleeplessness by night. When the speakers addressed them at the meetings in the street they called them harsh names—even swore at them—in an earnest endeavour to awaken them to the emergency of the hour and to urge them to proceed to Fort Yukon, so that there might be less danger of suffering in Dawson. It was often said that so complete was the stupidity of these men at the time of the starvation scare that, had the speakers gone among the crowds that faced them and administered a physical beating to any man they chose, no resistance would have been offered.

Every day, as little groups of men would determine to go on to Fort Yukon, scows and boats laden with human freight could be seen mingling with the cakes of ice, finally to disappear around a bend in the river. The extreme peril of drifting with the ice kept many from undertaking the journey, but, had the river been clear at the time, several hundred other men would undoubtedly have pursued the same course. The danger lay in being caught between the cakes in such a manner as either to crush the boat or overturn it, or in drifting helplessly into an ice-jam, so that the cakes that followed would crush the boat and throw the occupants into the water. The timidity of many who otherwise would have undertaken the trip was increased by the numerous reports of disasters that occurred daily almost under the eyes of the residents

of Dawson. The frozen body of a man had been seen floating by the town on a cake of ice, and several parties in disabled boats had been swept past in the ice-flow calling for the help that could not be given them. Another boat which had evidently had its bow crushed had floated by with the travellers riding on a cake of ice upon which the nose of the boat was resting. A scow-load of cattle also went by, and all these craft were unable to make shore, simply because the ice was so thick and so heavy that the occupants were unable to force their way through it. What finally became of these men will never be known, but it is thought that, when the ice finally jammed and froze solid, some were fortunate enough to escape in a partially frozen condition to the shore. The others, no doubt, perished.

Finally, early in November, the ice in the Yukon stopped still, and a few days later it was frozen hard. The water route to Fort Yukon, four hundred miles away, was closed for the winter, and whatever relief the inhabitants of the over-populated camp would have had from the impending curse of famine could be brought about only through travel up the Yukon River and over the mountain passes to the sea-coast. While it would have been nearly two hundred miles nearer to have gone to Fort Yukon, travellers preferred the longer journey, because an uncertainty existed as to whether or not the provision barges were really at Fort Yukon, and, in the event of their not being there, the men would be in a much worse position than they would have been in Dawson, because Fort Yukon is a

round thousand miles from the sea-coast, any way you take it, excepting north.

Then it dawned upon a great many men that without provisions it would be quite impossible to mine for gold during that winter, because they could not even ask for work without being met by a counter question relative to their supply of provisions. If they had no provisions miners were unwilling to hire them. These discontented men were unwilling to try hunting moose and caribou as a means of subsistence and of getting sufficient money to buy food at the exorbitant rates then being asked, so there was nothing to do but undertake the journey over the snow and ice to Skagway, Alaska. The journey had never before been made without the use of dogs, and when it became known in the camp that four hundred men were about to begin the journey coastwards, drawing their own sleds, blankets, and provisions with them, the old miners shook their heads and talked of instances where men who had had the help of dogs had become exhausted on the trail and had frozen to death.

But there was no other alternative than to undertake the trip, and during the early weeks of December, after the snow had sifted in between the blocks of ice and levelled the way a trifle, little caravans of disgusted but determined men wended their way out on to the Yukon River and slowly disappeared in the darkness and the falling snow in the direction of the coast towns. One of the men, named Bruske, even undertook the journey without a sled, carrying two blankets and a few provisions on his back. He continued alone to

Stewart River, where he joined forces with a man who owned a sled, and the trip was continued in safety. The others took sleds, travelling in groups of two or three, so that considerable weight could be saved by using but one stove, one tent, and one cooking outfit.

The trials and hardships of these unfortunate men who had first striven so hard to reach the gold-fields, and now were forced to go back to their homes without having had a single chance of satisfying their desire to search for gold, can scarcely be over-estimated. They continued along in weather that was extremely cold and stormy until Thirty-Mile River was reached : there they were forced to wait a few days until the swift little river should freeze over, and, finally, being unable to remain longer on account of the shortage of provisions in their larders, they had to break a trail through the deep snow for thirty miles along the banks of the turbulent stream and through the neighbouring forests. A few of them had their feet frozen on the journey, but the majority arrived in safety, after from six to eight weeks' hard travel, at Skagway. There was but one case, I believe, which resulted seriously, and that was a young man who froze his feet so badly near Five Finger Rapids that there was no feeling below the knees. His uncle, with whom he was travelling, helped him into a cabin that they either discovered in the timber or built by themselves, and it was then found that the young man was in such a condition from continued travelling with frozen feet that his legs would have to be amputated.

The uncle, an inhuman fellow, urged the younger man to commit suicide, saying that death could be the only possible result from amputation, and that this would relieve the uncle from the necessity of drawing him to the sea-coast. Fortunately, some old travellers happened to pass with a dog-team, and took the boy to Skagway, and then to Seattle, Washington, where he was given medical attendance, and, although both his legs had to be amputated, his life was saved.

With the departure of these men, together with two or three hundred who, later on, journeyed outward with dog-teams, affairs began to assume a more settled shape, but not until after several months of exorbitant prices and threatened famines in certain kinds of supplies and provisions. Those who went away from Dawson had varying amounts of provisions to sell before they left. Men who had bought up supplies in the summer, intending to speculate on them in winter, were forced from time to time to relinquish their holdings, and men who had more than enough flour to supply their personal needs exchanged with others who had an abundance of bacon, and in this way the threatened famine grew less and less formidable until spring came, and there were still sufficient provisions to last the miners until the arrival of the boats from the upper river.

I believe that flour was the scarcest of all the commodities, and the unusually small supply was occasioned by the fact that the earlier steamers brought other foods, intending to bring the cargoes of flour later, an undertaking which was seriously interfered with

by the coming of the ice. Flour that ordinarily sold at the stores for about one pound five shillings (or five dollars) a fifty-pound sack, rose in value to twelve pounds (or sixty dollars) a sack, and it was so difficult at times to get it even at that figure that twenty pounds (or one hundred dollars) was paid. As the



TRADERS RECEIVING PAYMENT IN GOLD DUST

season advanced the price fell month by month, so that in March and April, when the speculators had expected to get even greater prices for their flour, it was scarcely three times the customary price.

In early days the miners were never given to speculating in provisions, and when one miner was short of flour, or beans, or bacon, a neighbour was always willing to accommodate him by advancing the quantity desired, the understanding being that the supplies were

to be made good whenever they were needed by the lender. This was always done, and no account was taken of the different values the provisions had at the times when they were borrowed or paid back. And when the speculators appeared upon the scene, to gamble on the possibility that some unfortunate miner might be so near the point of starvation that he would willingly pay the most exorbitant prices for food, the miners frowned on this infamous business, and their dislike was so great that many of them would rather do without certain provisions than patronise these petty dealers. A story was told during the winter of threatened starvation of a dealer who went to Forty-Mile Post when the ice formed and bought all the flour to be had in the camp. Afterwards he freighted it to Dawson, a distance of fifty miles, with dogs, where it was delivered at a total cost to him of about three pounds (or fifteen dollars) a sack. The flour was stored safely away, and, although the dealer was offered fifteen pounds (or seventy-five dollars) a sack for all he had, he refused to sell. A few months afterwards the price of flour suddenly dropped, so that the value of his stock was about equal to its original cost. The dealer was then forced to unload at these figures to save his investment, and great was the rejoicing among the miners at his loss. His original supply had been large, and the amount he lost by not selling earlier amounted to a small fortune.

Next to flour, oatmeal, rolled oats, hominy, and other cereals were the scarcest provisions in the camp, and the price of each was for several months six

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A HERD OF REINDEER

shillings (or a dollar and a half) a pound. Rice and beans sold frequently for four shillings (or one dollar) a pound, and it was seldom that any one could get more than five or ten pounds at a time. There was never much of a scarcity of bacon, and its ordinary price during those troublous times was two shillings (or fifty cents) a pound, although it sometimes sold for double that price. Ham was always a luxury that one seldom dared even to dream of, and a fresh potato was a seven-days wonder. There was only one man in Dawson, I believe, who had fresh potatoes, and he had but one sack, so that he had to use them very sparingly and only on state occasions. Some of the miners had a form of dried potatoes that sold in the street for four shillings (or one dollar) a pound; but these were often found to be bitter and unfit for use.

Sugar, syrup, condensed milk, butter, canned fruits, and canned vegetables were reckoned as luxuries, but sugar in the North really becomes a necessity rather than a luxury because of its heat-producing qualities, and it was a common thing for a man who had never before used sugar to buy it in Dawson by the hundred-pound keg. The supply of sugar in the stores was large at first, because it had always been the custom in years past to make "hootch," a poor quality of liquor used as a substitute for whisky, and sugar entered largely into its manufacture. The customary price for sugar at the general stores was two and sixpence (or thirty cents) a pound, although speculators soon ran the price up to three times that amount. Syrup was rather scarce and seldom met with save in the

cabins of the "ultra-rich," and condensed milk at four shillings (or one dollar) a tin was considered something of a treat. Canned fruits, vegetables, and jelly were very hard to get, and a correspondingly exorbitant price was always asked for them. Dried fruits, including apples, apricots, prunes, plums, and peaches, which always form an important part of a miner's winter outfit, were sold at that time for four shillings (or a dollar) a pound—three times their ordinary value.

Although their warehouses were empty, and their shelves practically barren, the stores were nearly always filled with an eager, curious crowd of would-be purchasers anxious to learn if any provisions had lately been placed on sale. The miners have always been in the habit of purchasing their supplies from the older stores, because, no matter what the speculators asked in the street for a sack of flour or a "slab" of bacon, the price in the stores was never raised or lowered from the customary standard. This rule was adhered to even when flour was selling in the streets at six and eight times the store price.

The Alaska Commercial Company during the time when provisions were short filled its guaranteed orders and then sold its remaining goods in any quantities and to any person who made application to purchase them. This afterwards worked as a detriment to the camp, because it gave the speculators a chance to operate. The North American Transportation and Trading Company, under the management of Captain Healy, failed to fill its guaranteed orders, thereby causing great annoyance to the old miners, who had

ordered their supplies as early as August and September, and had paid for them in advance so that their delivery might be guaranteed. Notwithstanding this action on the part of the company, they afterwards put certain goods upon the shelves that comprised the very articles they had refused to deliver on guaranteed orders, and sold them in very small lots to individual purchasers. The quantity that one could purchase of these supplies at a time was seldom more than two pounds' (or ten dollars') worth, and if the purchaser came to the store too often he was regarded as an agent of the speculators, and would afterwards be refused the right to purchase. This method gave some satisfaction, and I believe that a great deal of the credit for the manner in which prices were kept as low as they were is due to Captain Healy, although I agree with many others in censuring him for his treatment of the old miners, many of whom had patronised him at his lower-river station in early years and enabled him to obtain the commercial position he then held. I believe, however, that the managers of the stores exercised their best judgment with unselfish motives when they were confronted with these serious questions, and they should not be censured too severely. The position of these managers, who for a time were practically forced to fight against the enlargement of their trade rather than to increase it, was one almost unique in the history of North America, and not likely to recur in a score of years.

When the supply of provisions became short and the camp was threatened with famine, Captain Con-

stantine, of the North-West Mounted Police, was forced to send a detachment of his men to Forty-Mile Post because there were not sufficient provisions in the barracks to feed the men, and those who remained in Dawson with the Captain had to live throughout the winter on reduced rations. Whenever it became necessary to arrest a man, the police always inquired if he had an outfit of provisions that could be taken to the barracks for his use while he was awaiting trial. If he had no provisions the arrest was ordinarily not made, but the man was occasionally looked after by the police to see that he was still in camp. In this connection a case that illustrates the complete isolation of the Klondike when the winter is on might be cited. A man who was clearly guilty of a certain crime was arrested, but, there being no provisions in his cabin upon which he could live, was given his freedom that he might shift for himself. Afterwards, when he was found guilty and sent to imprisonment, he was sometimes given a half-day's liberty to go into the town and visit his wife, who was ill, the authorities knowing that there was not the least possibility of his attempting an escape.

The winter gradually gave way to spring, and it became more and more evident that there were provisions enough in the camp to last until the ice would break in May. Prices gradually became lower, and the speculators who had held on to their goods were forced to sell to avoid complete loss. Butter, sugar, and milk were practically the only necessities that still commanded the exorbitantly high prices of early

DECREASE OF THE FAMINE SCARE 131

winter. A two-pound can of butter often sold for two sovereigns (or ten dollars) ; condensed milk was four shillings (or one dollar) a can, and a pound of sugar was worth the same sum.

With the decrease of the famine scare a stray restaurant or two sprang up here and there about the town, and undertook to serve meals at ten shillings (or two and a half dollars) each, but within six weeks or two months the price fell to six shillings. These restaurants frequently bought moose and caribou meat from the Indian hunters, and the fact that fresh meat was served at a particular restaurant was usually proclaimed to the inhabitants by means of loud posters and signs hung in front of the building. It very often happened, however, that, through good management on the part of the proprietors, the supply of moose steaks would unfortunately be just exhausted as the hungry miner took his seat at the table, and bacon and ham would very naturally be served as a substitute. The moose-steak signs and posters, however, were seldom taken down, and many a caribou steak came from the grill in these mushroom restaurants under the more enticing name of moose. The bill of fare, in addition to meat, usually included small side-dishes of beans, rice, dried corn, and dried potatoes, and afterwards tea or coffee and a piece of dried-fruit pie would be given. But, even at these prices, there was usually very little profit in restaurants, because supplies, rents, and the wages of the cook were exceptionally high, and a number of them were forced to close their doors permanently.

A Yankee baker from Massachusetts installed himself in a little log cabin in the very middle of the main street during the winter of 1897-98, and made a snug little fortune before spring by selling bread and pie to the white miners and the Indians. This man set the price on his products in accordance with the highest



LAPLANDERS WHO ACCOMPANIED THE RELIEF EXPEDITION

price that flour had ever sold at, and when the price dropped he forgot to lower the price of bread in proportion. Those were palmy days for him, and many a dollar found its way into his money bags for future use in some quiet little New England town. At that time stampedes were common, dozens of men leaving every week on business trips to the sea-coast, and this baker did a fabulous trade making

dough-nuts by the bushel, which the travellers preferred to take with them on their sleds rather than be troubled by baking bread. In the spring of the year the police ordered the removal of all buildings that had been erected in the streets, and, among the others, the Yankee baker's cabin was torn down. He had lost his "grip," so he took his gold sacks and left for Massachusetts.

During the early spring, after the dog-teams began to arrive from the coast, a party of three men reached Dawson with a turkey, the first of its species in the Klondike camp: it had been cooked in Seattle, Washington, and then kept in a frozen condition until it arrived in Dawson. The turkey was raffled for, and enough tickets were sold to yield forty pounds (or two hundred dollars) to the men who had undertaken the venture. The turkey was placed on exhibition in the Pioneer Saloon, where it was the centre of interest for several days. It had been brought a total distance of more than seventeen hundred miles, more than a thousand miles by sea, and the rest over the ice with dog-sleds. This party also brought to Dawson several cans of oysters, that sold for four pounds (or twenty dollars) a quart can.

With the breaking of the ice in May, small boats and scows, carrying tons and tons of provisions and luxuries, and manned by hundreds of men and boys, came floating down the river from the direction of the head-lakes and the mountain passes, and once more prices assumed a normal standard. These boats arrived so rapidly in June and July that the river bank was lined

with them for a distance of nearly two miles, and sometimes the line was two and three boats deep. In fact, the crafts lay so densely packed that it was difficult at times for the late comers to find landing-places, and many were forced to ascend the Klondike river a short way before they could pitch their camp.

Many of these new comers, who had known through the winter of the shortage of supplies in the Klondike, had brought in scow-loads of provisions, which they had little difficulty in selling upon their arrival. Stores or shops were established, and there was then an end to the undue tension that had prevailed for several months, and had been caused by the impending famine. A month later the river steamers arrived from St. Michael's, the company warehouses were filled, and I believe the last famine that will ever threaten the people of the Yukon River was a thing of the past. Men who had not been able to pay the high prices for flour had done without, in many instances, for two or even three months, others had felt the want of sugar, fruit, or condensed milk, but there were always enough beans and bacon and other staples in the camp, and certainly no one had starved.

In the spring news came up from Fort Yukon that the greater number of the men who had drifted down with the ice in the autumn had reached their destination in safety, although some had had their feet frozen on the journey. Their sufferings, as they drifted along, exposed to the cold and quite unable to use artificial heat, were sometimes intense. When they arrived at Fort Yukon they found representatives of the companies in

charge of the provisions, and, as many of the travellers were without money, riots were threatened if these agents persisted in their refusal to let them have supplies. At this juncture Captain Ray, who had been sent north by the War Department of the United States to report on existing conditions at Circle City, took charge of the stores on the barges and gave small quantities of provisions to each applicant, and if the men were unable to pay for them he took their notes instead, with the understanding that the men would honour these notes when they found work. The majority of the men at Fort Yukon got safely through the winter and returned to Dawson, some over the ice and some on river steamers.

In July, a man from the State of Washington brought a cow to Dawson—also the first of its species to arrive—and the first milking was sold for eight pounds (or forty dollars). Afterwards the owner of the cow supplied one of the saloons with pint bottles of the precious fluid and made a good profit, selling them for four shillings (or one dollar each). Other cows, and also herds of cattle for beef, were later on brought down the river in boats, and the monopoly of the granger from Washington was somewhat interfered with.

Another man brought in four chickens and offered them for sale. A placard was attached to the end of a stick and read :

FORE SAIL—\$80.00.

Eighty dollars is equal to about sixteen pounds.

Whether he ever found a purchaser I very much doubt, for soon afterwards hundreds of chickens were brought up the river and sold to the restaurants. Dawson also had fresh potatoes at four shillings (or a dollar) a pound, for three short months, and then we had to resort again to the desiccated or dried variety.

Another mis-spelled sign that is recalled by the incident of the chickens was tacked to the door of a shabby tent in which a new-comer had established a bakery. The sign read :

3 loves—one doller.

I never could find out where he got his supply.

Since the rush to Klondike was begun, manufacturers have undertaken to supply the trade with dried potatoes, dried onions, and "crystallised" eggs, all of which are eatable—that is, if one has been in the North long enough to cultivate an appetite for such things. The summer arrivals brought numerous phonographs, with hundreds of rolls, so that we, who had spent the winter in complete isolation, soon felt, after hearing the latest songs from the phonographs, that we were to a certain extent up-to-date ; but when we saw animated pictures of express trains, sinking battleships, and other realistic views thrown upon white screens in our little theatres, we were certain of it.



HAULING LUMBER WITH A DOG-TEAM

CHAPTER VI

Extent of the Gold Belt on the North American Continent—Gold-fields of the Klondike—The Number of Rich Creeks—El Dorado Creek—Method of Staking a Mining Claim—How the Mining is Carried on—Duration of Mining Season—Abundance of Timber for Fires—Washing out the Gold in the Spring—Varying Value of the Klondike Gold—Bonanza, Hunker, Bear, Dominion, and Sulphur Creeks—Bench Claims—The Ancient River Channel—Occurrence of Large Quantities of Low Grade Material—The Government and the Miners—Miners' Life—Opportunities for Success.

THE gold-fields of the Great North-West cover an area of thousands of square miles, and the rich placer district in and around the Klondike River may be considered as a mere continuation or extension of the

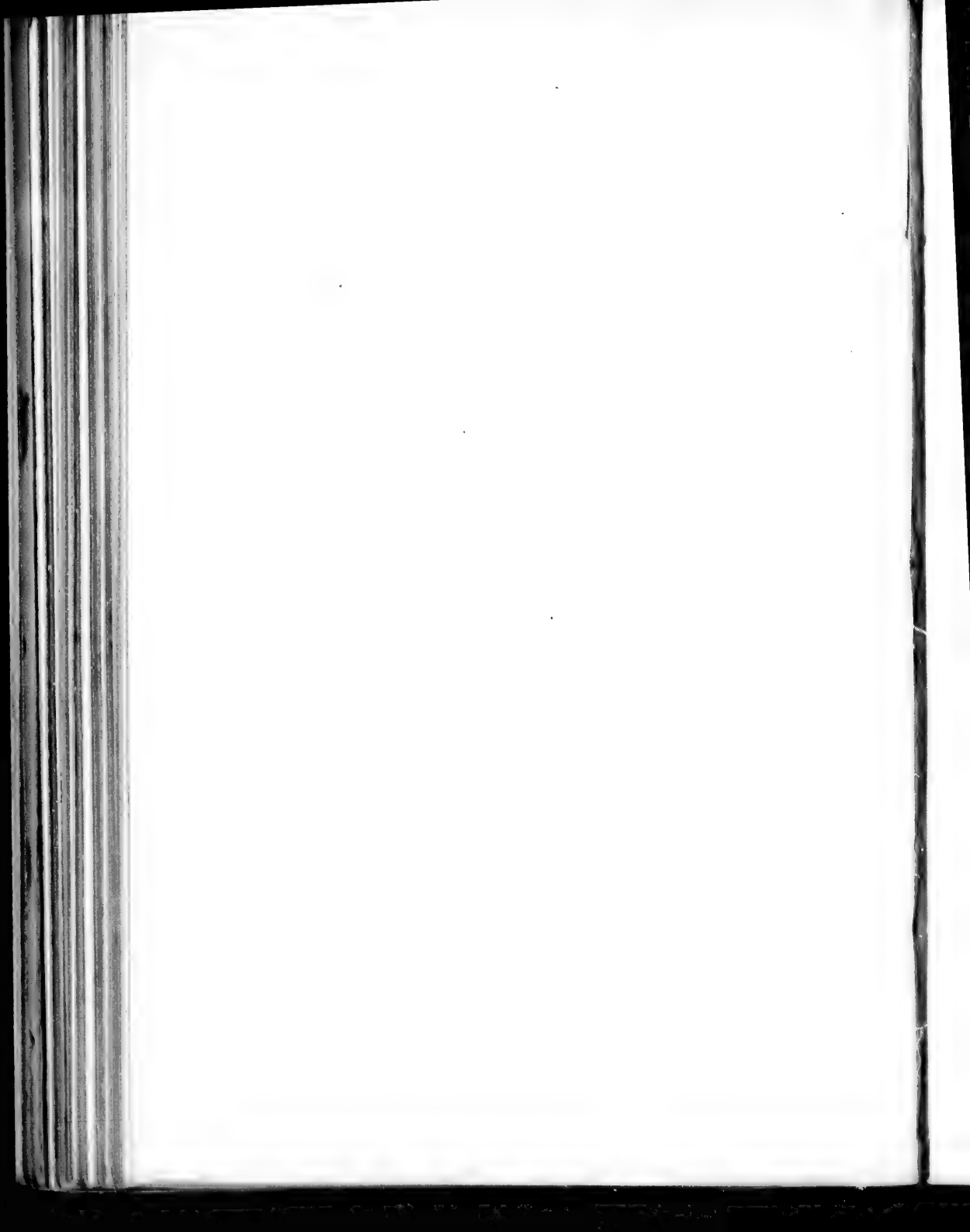
VELVE MONTHS IN KLONDIKE

mi. ra. belt of British Columbia and the western section of the United States. In fact, this great mineral region can easily be traced from the mountainous districts of South America northward through the Central America States, Mexico, California, and British Columbia, to the Klondike and the rich placers of Forty-Mile and the creeks in the neighbourhood of Circle City. Throughout this immense area, thousands of miles in length, hundreds of miners are continually entering the wilds of the mountain fastnesses, endeavouring to find new districts which will eventually prove that all the mining camps of the two American continents are closely connected one with the other. The latest discovery, since the Klondike was struck, was made on Atlin Lake, near Lake Tagish, and a reference to the map will show that it lies in a direct line drawn from the Klondike to the gold-fields of British Columbia. Whether gold will be discovered at points still farther north than the Klondike is a matter for speculation ; but, in view of the discoveries of the last twenty years, the chances may be said to be very much in its favour.

The gold-fields of the Klondike are confined merely to the tributaries of the Klondike and Indian rivers, but gold has never been found in paying quantities in either of these streams themselves. The areas drained by them are separated by a high range of hills, locally known as the summit, and the creeks that head in the direction of these quartz domes are the ones that have proved to be rich in placer gold. The whole section traversed by these tributaries is exceptionally hilly,



A WINTER SCENE AT THE MINES



almost mountainous, and there is a rather heavy growth of small timber on the hill-sides. The domes abound in quartz ledges, and are entirely devoid of timber.

As far as is known at the present time there are six creeks in this region that are exceptionally rich. On



MOUTH OF THE SKOOKUM GULCH

the Klondike side of these summits there are El Dorado, Bonanza, Hunker, and Bear, flowing north ; while on the Indian River side of the water-shed are Dominion and Sulphur Creeks. As tributaries of the first set of creeks, Skookum Gulch, Victoria Gulch, and French Gulch may be named as the best ; while Caribou, a tributary of Dominion, is considered fairly rich, as one of the smaller Indian river streams. Besides these creeks there are dozens of others that have

been staked to claims, but very little development work has been done, and their value is purely speculative.

El Dorado, which is undoubtedly the richest creek in the district, is a tributary of Bonanza, joining it at a point about half a mile from discovery claim. It is somewhat broader near the mouth than Bonanza at



PROSPECTING IN SUMMER

the point of confluence, and this fact, considered an objectionable feature by the miners, caused it to be left to the last before any one could be induced to stake, or "peg-out," a claim. Adams Creek, a tributary of Bonanza about

a mile below El Dorado, was staked for three miles before a peg was planted on El Dorado Creek, and the fact that Adams Creek is practically devoid of gold, and El Dorado fabulously rich, illustrates the fallacy of miners trying to estimate the value, or worthlessness, of a creek merely by the surface indications and the general appearance of the surrounding country. So great was the dislike for El Dorado

that a miner erected a sign near its mouth, which read : " This creek is reserved for Swedes and Chee-chockos " (*cheechockos* being an Indian word, meaning " new arrival ").

The miners stake the claims in the following manner—presuming, of course, that a " discovery " has been made upon a hitherto unlocated creek. The first " stamperders " to arrive drive their stakes, or " pegs," immediately on the upper or lower boundary line of discovery claim, as they may select, and then pace off 500 feet, where they erect two other stakes, one on each side of the creek, against the hill. Upon all of these stakes, which, by law, must be four feet high, and have four-inch faces, the miner writes the day and date, and " I claim 500 feet up stream [or down stream, as the case may be] for mining purposes." He then signs his name and writes the number of his " free miner's licence," which was previously issued to him by the Government for the sum of two guineas (or ten dollars). The next man arriving stakes off the next 500 feet, and so on, until the whole creek has been staked, when the belated arrivals usually try their luck on one of the different tributaries to this new creek.

Within three days from the time of staking, the miner goes before the Gold Commissioner in Dawson, and, after swearing that he has staked the claim in accordance with the law, he receives a certificate, costing three guineas (fifteen dollars), which entitles him to the exclusive right to mine for gold upon this particular claim for one year, at the termination of

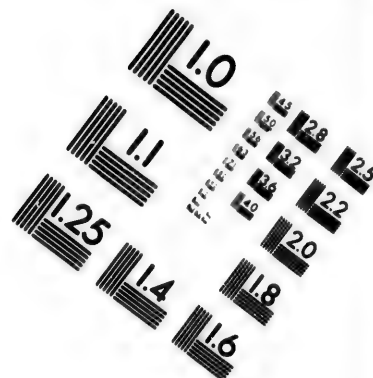
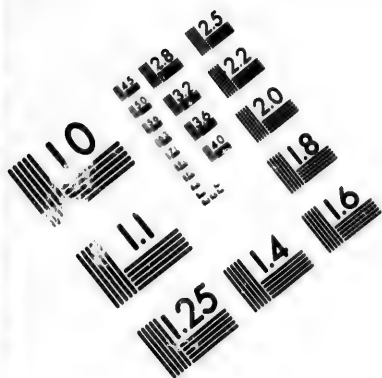
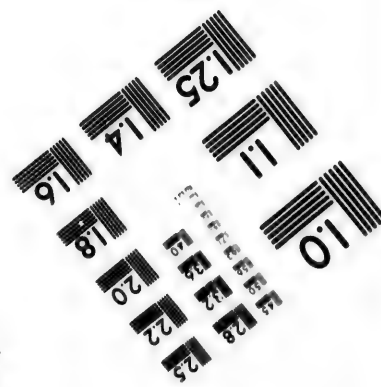
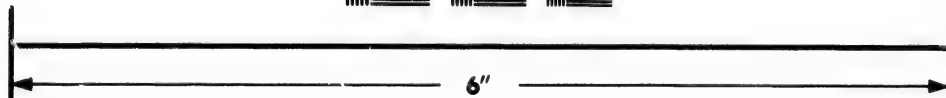
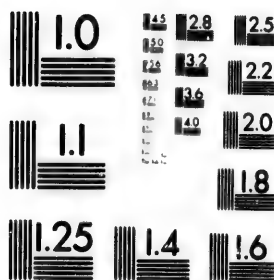


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which he has the privilege of renewal. He has no surface rights to the ground, but is permitted to cut cabin logs for a house and wood for use in his mine.

The methods employed in recovering the gold from the alluvial gravels of these creeks are peculiar to the



WAITING AT GOLD COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

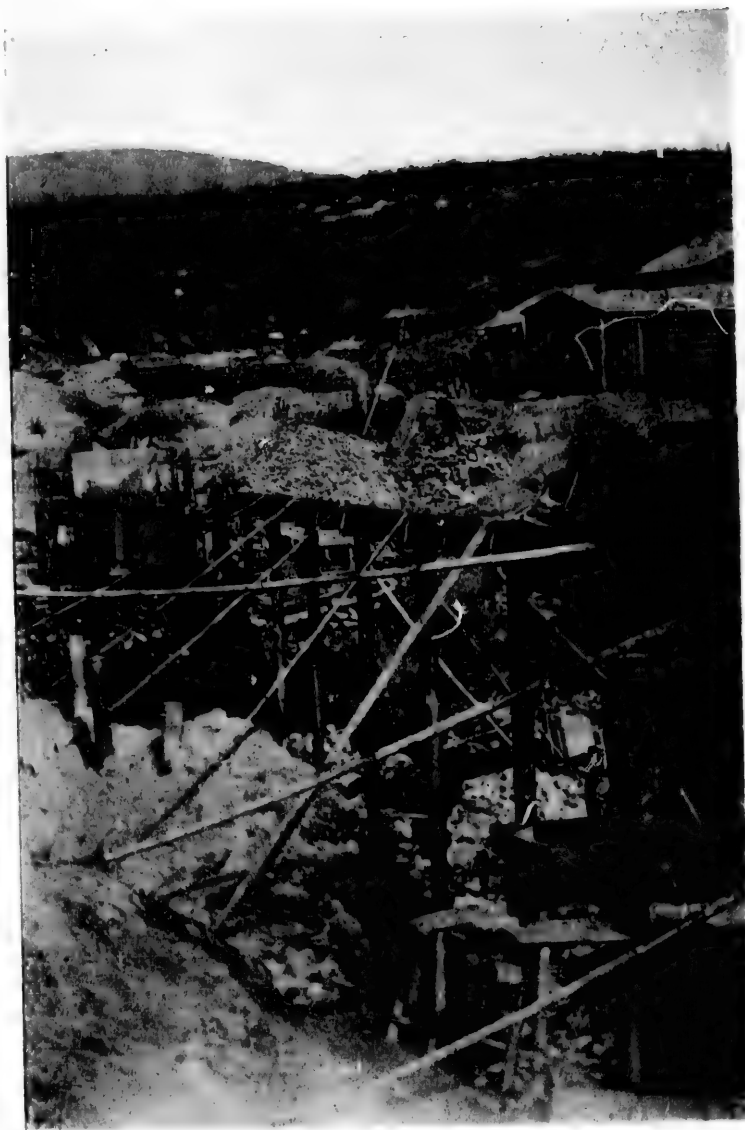
gold-fields of the Klondike. To understand this system it must first be known that the gold-bearing gravels were deposited at a very early age, and that, in conse-

quence of the enormous amount of *débris* torn away from the hill-sides by erosion and deposited in the beds of the older and larger creeks below, these gravels are buried to a depth varying from twelve to thirty-five feet. The intense cold of the long winters, and the consequent perpetual frost, has put an additional lock upon these vast treasures of wealth by freezing the gravels solidly together. The *débris* covering the gravels consists of layers of sand and "muck"—a black substance, consisting of sand, decomposed vegetable matter, &c.—all of which is cemented together by frost.

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MINING STAGING, AND PLATFORM

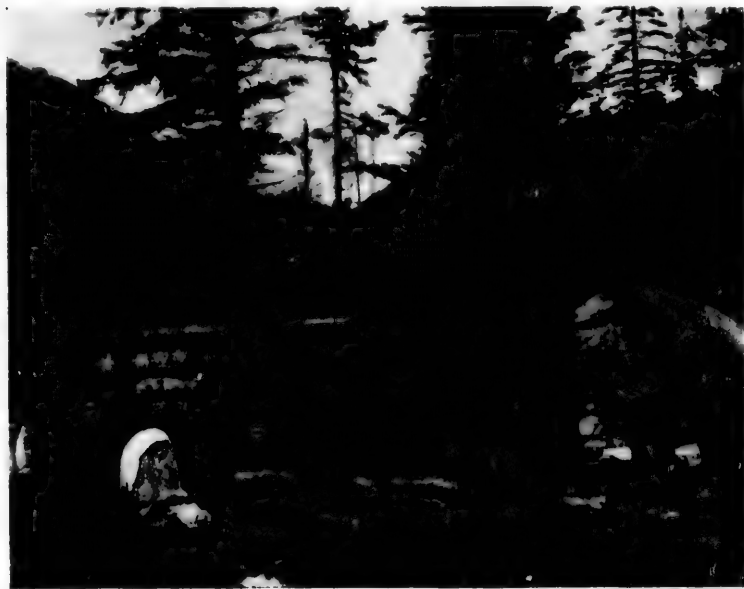
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In order to reach the gold-bearing gravel the miners first sink a shaft through the muck, which is found to be extremely brittle in its frozen state, the small pieces that fly in all directions under the blows of the pick being so thin and sharp that they pierce the skin and flesh with which they come in contact. Some miners prefer to build fires in the muck and shovel it to the surface in a thawed state, but others believe that it can be pierced more rapidly by "picking" it up frozen. When the shaft reaches a depth at which it becomes impossible for the miner to shovel the dirt to the surface a simple rope windlass is erected, and the dirt is hoisted in a bucket by a second miner, who remains on top.

When the muck is pierced and frozen gravel is encountered it becomes impossible to proceed further without fires. Consequently, both dry and green wood is sledded to the mine by dog-teams, and when this is split to the required fineness it is lowered into the shaft. The fire is built by first placing a layer of finely-split dry pine covered by heavier pieces of very dry wood. A second layer of green wood is then placed on this, the object being to produce a fire that will burn longest and "hold the heat." When all is ready the fire is lighted with a candle, the latter being used because experiment has shown that the temperature of the split wood, corresponding with the extremely low temperature of the surrounding atmosphere, must be brought to a certain degree of heat before it will ignite, and that matches are

practically useless for lighting in the ordinary degree of cold. When the fire is once started it burns with exceptional vigour and fierceness, because the hot air, rising so rapidly in the cold, produces an intense draft.



MINERS' CABIN

Gradually, then, the miner picks his way downward through the frozen gravel until he reaches bed-rock, testing his prospects each night in his cabin, where he thaws the pans of gravel over the fire. If the pay-gravel is rich enough and the layer is thick enough to warrant further development, he begins drifting—that is, he tunnels along the line of bed-rock, carefully building his fires so that only the gravel in the “face”

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(or end) of the tunnel is thawed, and not that of the roof (or "over-hang"), which would entail an extra amount of unnecessary shovelling. No timbering is necessary to keep the "over-hang" from falling, because the frost holds the gravel in place, and there



DRAWING UP THE GOLD-BEARING GRAVEL

is absolutely no danger from caving. At night the miner builds his fire, which burns fiercely until early morning, when it gradually dies out, and the perpetual draft caused by the heated gravel clears the shaft of smoke. The miner then descends the shaft, and, after shovelling back the "waste" gravel that contains no gold, he proceeds to send up the pay-dirt in the windlass bucket. His working partner, who remains on the surface, empties the gravel and returns the bucket

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for another load. In this way two men, working together, will place from one hundred to one hundred and eighty buckets of pay-dirt on the surface each day, the buckets holding about seven "pans" apiece. Every night the miner from the shaft washes a prospect pan or two, to tell if the pay-dirt is improving or losing in value, and on the following day builds his fires in the direction of the best prospects. These "pannings" are usually thrown into a discarded baking-powder can, or similar receptacle, and usually provide pocket-money for an occasional trip to Dawson. Ordinarily, these "pannings" amount to from one hundred to one thousand dollars (or from twenty to two hundred pounds), and even more, during the mining season.

The length of time during which the mines may be worked by the drifting system just described seldom exceeds five months, and more often it will scarcely last four months. The surface water usually makes it impossible to begin operations before November, and by the middle of March the weather has so moderated that the smoke and gases from the wood fires refuse to leave the shafts, making it impossible for the miner to descend. Several deaths have already occurred in the Klondike mines from suffocation by gas and smoke.

The hills of the Klondike region are thickly covered with a growth of small timber, the average diameter of the pine and spruce being perhaps about eight inches. House-logs are frequently found, however, that are very much larger than these, and no trouble is expe-

rienced in getting timbers large enough for setting heavy mining machinery. Birch is used, together with the pine and spruce, in thawing the gravel in the mines; and so great were the demands on the forest during the winter of 1897-98, that the hills of El Dorado have been bared almost to the last



A CORDUROYED ROAD OVER BOGGY GROUND

tree. Wherever the larger claims employ a number of men to work in the mine, there is always a corresponding wood-crew, whose duty it is to cut and haul sufficient timber to the claims for thawing the gravel.

It is seldom that the miner in the shaft, except on the richest claims, or the windlass man above, ever finds a nugget while the gravel is being excavated; these are always revealed by water in the prospect pan.

Frequently small particles of gold can be seen in the gravel dumps when the gravel is first thrown from the bucket, but the moment it freezes they become practically invisible.

The miners remain at work until the spring thaw brings the season's operations to a close. The warm sun gradually melts the great heaps of frozen gravel that have been thrown up on the surface, and by the time the miners have set the sluice boxes the "pay-dirt" is ready to be "shovelled in." The process of sluicing is practically the same as in other countries. A dam is built across the creek-bed at a convenient distance above the gravel heaps, and when the water rises to the required height it is led in wooden boxes or troughs to the claim. A "puddling-box," which is usually sixteen feet long and about three feet six inches wide at the widest place, is fitted with heavy pole "riffles," and in this stands a miner in rubber-boots, whose duty it is to throw out the larger rocks, after they are thoroughly washed, so that they will not clog the smaller boxes below. The gravel is usually shovelled into the small boxes above the "puddling-box." These are also fitted with pole "riffles," but their pitch is such that the *débris* is washed almost instantly into the "puddling-box." Below this last box are from two to six small boxes fitted with riffles, and having a fall of from five to ten inches to the box length (twelve feet).

After two or three days' run, the boxes are carefully cleaned of rocks and gravel, the riffles are lifted and the gold and black sand, of the latter of which there is

a great abundance in the Klondike, are carefully separated, by water, in the "puddling-box." Finally, the gold is placed in a miner's pan and carefully dried over a fire, when the fine grey sand which refused to be separated from the gold by water is easily blown away, so that nothing remains but the pure gold. The "dust" and nuggets are then weighed by ounces, and,



WHIP-SAWING LUMBER FOR SLUICE-BOXES

when this number has been multiplied by the value of an ounce, the result of the "shift" is definitely known. A magnet, the poles of which are covered loosely by a piece of heavy paper, is frequently used to lift the "black sand" and "magnetic iron" from the dry gold.

Both the creek and bench claims are frequently worked by the "lay," or lease system. This implies that the miners contract with the owner of a claim to

work a section of, perhaps, fifty feet of the claim, and agree to give the owner a percentage (usually 50 per cent.) of the output. The miners then supply everything needed to recover the gold, and the claim-holder



WHEELING GOLD-BEARING GRAVEL TO THE
SURFACE FOR WASHING

has practically no responsibilities. The owners of the richest claims, however, prefer to work their ground by day-wages, because the actual cost of recovery is much less than 50 per cent.

The gold recovered from the claims on El Dorado Creek is of a dark, brassy colour, and assays about

£3 4s. (or about fifteen dollars) to the ounce. The gold from the other creeks averages much better, the best quality being found on Hunker and Dominion Creeks. Bonanza gold is bright in colour, and assays about £3 6s. (sixteen dollars) to the ounce.

The El Dorado claims have been worked very extensively for two years, and it is a common thing for the net output for a season's work to reach £40,000 sterling (200,000 dollars). The gold is largely in nugget form, and the ground, near bed-rock, is often so rich that the gold may readily be seen during the process of shovelling and hoisting. Wherever the bed-rock is rough and broken, and when the channel of the stream has been turned by a projecting point of rough "rim-rock," the gold lies thickest, and it is in places of this nature that the big pans have been secured. The best pan washed so far netted about £140 (or 700 dollars), and was scraped from the crevices of bed-rock, which form natural riffles for the gold to lodge in. As an illustration of the wealth of the first three miles of El Dorado, a few facts may be given concerning claim No. 9, a half-interest in which was sold once for £170 (about 800 dollars). The lower half (250 feet) was extensively worked during the winter of 1897-98 by the drifting system, and the net output in the spring was £50,000 (or a quarter of a million dollars). It must also be understood that the miners took only the better part of the pay-streak, and left off work on the sides when the gravel panned less than four shillings (one dollar) to the pan. The wealth of this claim is estimated at £200,000 (or one million dollars). There are three miles of El Dorado claims which will average three quarters of this sum in gross output.

Bonanza and Hunker Creeks were shown by a winter's development to be somewhat "spotted," but the winter's work taken as a whole was very satisfac-

tory. Bonanza Creek is now known to be richer above Discovery than below, and Hunker Creek is considered to be best in and around Discovery claim, where the "bed-rock," having risen toward the surface, caught a great deal of the original run of gold. The claims on these creeks, excepting those of the lower ends,

which must be worked by hydraulic machinery, if at all, are held at a high figure in Dawson.

Dominion and Sulphur Creeks, flowing into the Indian River, were partially developed last winter, the work being greatly hampered by the shortage of provisions and the scarcity of miners. Enough was



A PAN OF GOLD NUGGETS

shown, however, to place these creeks on an equal footing with Bonanza and Hunker Creeks, and their development during the present winter (1898-99) will be carried on to a great extent. Claim thirty-one below Upper Discovery on Dominion creek was worked for a short while during the past winter, and over twelve thousand pounds' worth (sixty thousand dollars) was taken out. Dominion is at its best between the two Discoveries, a distance of about five miles, and Sulphur is considered more valuable above Discovery

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WASHING GRAVEL FOR GOLD



than below it. Both creeks have a good natural fall, plenty of water for mining purposes, and an abundant supply of timber.

Bear Creek, a tributary of the Klondike River running parallel to, and between, Bonanza and Hunker Creeks, is quite rich, and the gold is largely in the form of nuggets. The metal is bright, and its appearance led to the belief that it had a greater assay value than the ordinary commercial gold dust. Consequently, when miners were about to visit the United States or Canada, they frequently exchanged the common gold for the Bear Creek variety. Their chagrin may readily be imagined when they arrived in Seattle and found that the bright colour of the gold was due largely to copper, and that its assay value was actually less than that of El Dorado gold. However, Bear Creek is considered the best of the smaller creeks in the Klondike, and its future output, estimated in dollars, runs into six figures.

The size of the claims on the six origin creeks just mentioned is five hundred feet in length, measured in the general direction of the stream, and extending from "rim" to "rim," which practically means the hills on either side.

The bench claims have had their origin from two separate and distinct causes. Along the edges of the creek claims, and more particularly where a low point of land extends out into the general creek valley, rich deposits of alluvial gravel occur, and these have been staked and recorded as "bench," or "hill-side" claims. They show that the present course of the

different creeks is not identical with that of earlier times, and that they flowed in many instances at different levels. "Bench" claims formed in this manner seldom extend up the hill-side farther than one claim, although the second and even the third tiers have proved in exceptional cases to be good. At the time



WORKING A BENCH CLAIM IN SUMMER

these claims were staked the mining laws differed considerably from the present laws, and their size was limited to one hundred feet, measured along the side of the adjoining creek claim, and one hundred feet, measured at right angles, up the hill. Under the new regulations, however, these claims may be two hundred and fifty feet measured with the creek, and one thousand feet up the hill. Where hundred-foot claims were originally staked along the line of the

creek claims, prior to the enactment of the latest regulations, the Government officials allow adjoining claims to measure two hundred and fifty feet square, but in no case will the Government increase the size of the hundred-foot claims.

Bench claims of the character first described have been staked at irregular intervals along the edges of creek claims on El Dorado, Bonanza, Hunker, Dominion and Bear Creeks, and, since the new regulations have come into force, these claims are interspersed between claims of the two larger sizes. However, in many cases, the hundred-foot claims have proved exceptionally rich, particularly on El Dorado and Bonanza Creeks, and the miners are, to a certain degree, satisfied with this rather confusing state of affairs.

The second class of benches have been staked at a height considerably above the first, the elevation varying from two to four hundred feet. These claims lie in what is locally known as the "old channel," which, to all appearances, is the bed of an ancient river of huge proportions, which can readily be traced along the summits of the high hills on the west side of El Dorado and Bonanza Creeks. This "channel" keeps its general level above the neighbouring creek-beds for several miles, and, since the claims along it have been worked, its location and direction can generally be traced by the long line of white gravel-dumps thrown out upon the surface. The *débris* in the bed of this old channel is generally accepted to be pulverised talc and quartz, carrying with it quartz boulders of

considerable size, all of them being well rounded by the action of water. The theory was at first advanced that the occurrence of this bed of gold-bearing *débris* was due to glacial action, but the absence of polished rock surfaces and the total lack of any evidence of a moraine has led to the abandonment of the idea.



A BENCH CLAIM

The quartz rock and ordinary gravel found in the old channel are well worn by an action which was unmistakably that of water; and the manner in which these deposits lie, and the general, even elevation of the *débris* on the hill-sides, prove conclusively that an immense

river, which was much larger than the Yukon, flowed at some early time through the great North-West, and that subsequent upheavals and other changes have obliterated all but a few miles of its course.

The portion of the channel already traced has its beginning on a hill-top at the junction of El Dorado Creek and French Gulch, and follows down across Irish Gulch, the two Skookums, Adams Creek, and Fox Gulch, and eventually is lost somewhere in the hills of Lower Bonanza. This old channel has an

extreme width in some places of two miles, although the average breadth is much less.

At different points in the *débris* of the old channel, gold occurs in great quantities. The French Hill mines have proved to be fabulously rich, and individual miners have frequently recovered two hundred pounds (one thousand dollars) a day with a common rocker. The gold of French Hill, and of the old channel generally, is of a brighter colour than the gold of the creek-beds, and it occurs both in "dust" and in nugget form. Nuggets worth from thirty to fifty sovereigns, or one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty



OFF TO THE HILLS

dollars, have been found from time to time ; and one claim, which was one hundred feet square, recently sold for twenty-five thousand pounds (one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars). Others have sold for ten thousand pounds (fifty thousand dollars), and on a small claim near Discovery three men in thirty-four days rocked out three thousand pounds, or fifteen thousand dollars.

If the claims located on the old channel are followed for a distance of several miles in the direction of Lower

Bonanza, the pay will be found to decrease both in quantity and in the size of gold particles. The nuggets grow smaller as the distance increases, and the "dust" becomes much finer. Above French Hill, in the direction of Upper El Dorado, no trace of the old channel has been found, although it has been extensively pro-



FRENCH HILL DIGGINGS

spected for. The theories involving the lost end of the channel, and concerning its origin, are almost without number, but none of them have led to the discovery of the upper channel, and for that reason they are probably not worth considering.

The bench claims are worked in a much more economical manner than the creek claims. Their "bed-rock" usually lies within a few feet of the surface, and

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"drifting," by the expensive wood-fire system, is seldom carried on. As a substitute for the fire, the miners prefer to utilise the heat-rays of the sun, and consequently their operations are confined to the summer season. The sun melts the upper layer, or crust, of frozen "muck," or gravel, as the case may be, and the



POURING WATER ON GRAVEL IN ROCKER

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miners, working at night, when it is quite as light as in the day, remove the portion that has thawed loose. This process is repeated until the pay-gravel is reached, when, instead of shovelling it aside, as in the case of "waste," it is run through either a sluice box or a rocker, and the gold is in this way recovered.

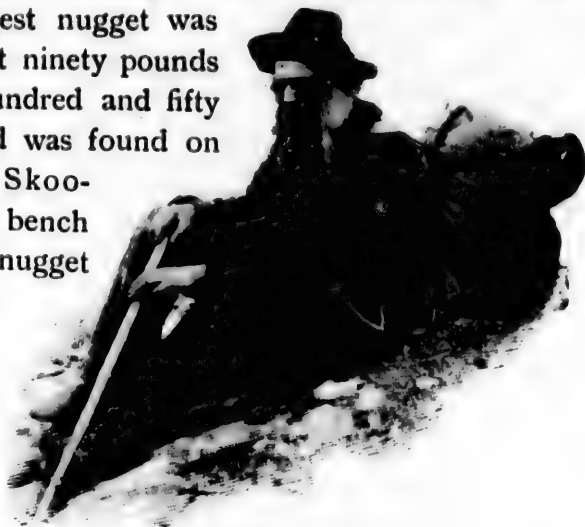
The drainage of most bench claims is so perfect that little inconvenience is ever caused by water; in fact, the main difficulty in working most of the bench

claims is a scarcity of water, making it necessary to use the same water time after time in the "rocker."

Apart from the exceptionally rich mines of French Hill and other localities on the great channel, there is an immense body of "low-grade" material that cannot be profitably worked by the methods already explained in this chapter. This ground seems quite unlimited in area, and prospects anywhere from the fraction of a penny to sixpence (about ten cents) to the pan. Frequently these low-grade workings are "scratched over" by prospectors, who work until the "waste-capping" becomes too expensive to handle, and then seek other locations. It remains, then, for capital to enter the field armed with hydraulic machinery to eventually harvest thousands of pounds sterling in fine dust and "colours." Two such enterprises are already entering the field, and others no doubt will soon follow in their footsteps. The "waste-capping" covering the alluvial deposit varies in thickness in different localities, and the economical disposal of this will, of course, be one of the important questions that will confront the engineers in charge. Under the present condition, the work of developing bench claims and prospecting for others is confined to the short summer, which is of about five months' duration.

The season's output of all the Klondike mines for the winter of 1897-98 was practically three million pounds (or fifteen million dollars). About two million pounds (or ten million dollars) of this sum was shipped to points in Canada, the United States, and England. The remaining one million pounds (or five million

dollars) was retained in Dawson by the miners for use during the coming winter. The largest nugget yet found in the Klondike was taken from claim number five, El Dorado, and weighed out at about one hundred and fifty pounds sterling (or six hundred dollars). The second largest nugget was worth about ninety pounds (or four hundred and fifty dollars), and was found on Peterson's Skookum Gulch bench claim. A nugget worth fifty pounds (or two hundred and fifty dollars) was found in February 1898 on a bench claim owned by William Reavis, off of claim number five, El Dorado Creek.



AN OLD PROSPECTOR

It is quite impossible to estimate the output of all the Klondike mines for the season of 1898-99, but it would not be too much to say that it will be twice that of the preceding year. This conclusion is arrived at in view of the fact that the working population of the Klondike at the present time is at least four times as great as during the season of 1897-98, and the reduction of the Government royalties will cause the working and developing of all the "known" creeks to the

fullest extent, besides dozens of new and practically unknown creeks.

The relation of the Canadian Government to the individual miner has been such as to hinder, rather

than to encourage, extensive workings in the mines. The Government had stationed in Dawson during 1897-98 several officials whose primary object was evidently to better their own financial condition, and they did their duty to the people only when



TESTING GRAVEL

it did not interfere with their personal investments and speculations. Certain accusations against these men led the Government to make radical changes, and the local administration that has succeeded them is satisfactory to the mining public. During the *régime* of the pioneer officials it was a common thing for a

miner to prospect unknown ground, and, when he had found good prospects, discover that some one intimately connected with the clerks of the Gold Commission Office had been given the preference. Then, after the miner had been informed falsely that the ground was already recorded, the friends of the clerks would stake and record the claim in their own names.

Under the then existing administration the miner had little or no redress. But among these corrupt officials there were a few whose honesty and excellent character stood out in bold relief, and these men deserve great credit for the straightforward manner in which they did their duty to the miners and to the Government,

even under the most trying circumstances. Among them must be mentioned Captain Constantine, of the North-West Mounted Police, who spent four years in and around the Klondike and Forty-Mile Post, at the head of the police detachment, and who severed his connection with the district when the dishonesty of others became so flagrant as to cast dishonour upon the whole administration. It is believed that the information which Captain Constantine gave to the Canadian officials at Regina and Ottawa was primarily the cause



CLEANING A ROCKER

of the removal of the dishonest agents in Dawson. When Captain and Mrs. Constantine left Dawson during the summer of 1898, the miners presented them with a silver plate laden with gold nuggets. Captain Constantine left the North a poor man, always believing that Government officials were at their posts of duty to administer the law and not to speculate in mines for their own private interests. Another man who deserves equal praise was Judge McGuire, who gave great satisfaction during his short term in Dawson as the judge of the district. Judge McGuire was a man of excellent qualities and sterling worth.

It is very evident that the future of the Klondike mines depends largely upon the success that will be met with in the different hydraulic enterprises. It is certain that only the richest creeks can be worked with a profit by the expensive systems now in vogue, and hydraulicing is the only agency by which the miners can hope to recover the greater part of the gold that is widely distributed over all the creek-bed areas of this region. Hydraulic experts, who have already made a thorough examination of the different creeks and have considered the conditions that will have to be dealt with if hydraulic methods are installed, believe that the only difficulty they will experience will be to obtain the volume and pressure of water necessary for such work. The combined influence of a heavy stream of water, under considerable pressure, and the direct effect of the sun's heat, will certainly be effective in removing the "waste" and laying bare the gold-bearing gravel.

The life of the Klondike miner is not one into which men should rush without at least giving the matter a second thought. The conditions in the past have been such that the most rugged constitutions have been undermined in a few years, and it has taken years



A PROSPECTOR

of life in more favoured climates to restore them to their natural health.

It is probable that the main cause of this is the lack of fresh food and the fact that every miner must necessarily prepare his own meals. Very little fresh meat enters into his daily bill of fare, and fresh vegetables, of course, are seldom met with. During the summer or autumn the miner purchases his winter's supplies from the commercial companies,

and when the snow flies and the ice comes he sleds his provisions to his cabin, either with dogs or by drawing them himself. A winter's outfit consists usually of bacon, ham, beans, rice, flour, oatmeal, dried fruit, condensed potatoes and onions, condensed

milk, and sugar. This is sometimes increased during the winter by a quarter of moose or caribou, but fresh game is a luxury, and few miners were fortunate enough to get it during the winter of 1897-98. The fresh meat is left hanging outside the cabin door, and remains frozen until used. When in this condition meat is extremely brittle,



A PROSPECTOR AT WORK

and the miner cuts off a steak with a small hand-saw—he dares not chop it, for that causes it to fly in little bits in a thousand directions.

This reminds me of an amusing experience I had in December 1897. In going to Dawson one day I met a man on Bonanza Creek, who was freighting his winter's supplies to his claim. When I came upon him he was kneeling beside his sled closely examining a quarter of beef. When I approached him he asked if I would pass an opinion on a quarter of beef that lay on the sled, and say whether I thought

it was beef or horseflesh. I readily pronounced it beef; but upon closer examination I concluded that I might be mistaken. The hide was reddish, not unlike that of beef, but the hair was quite short, resembling that of a horse. There was scarcely enough hide on the quarter to form an opinion, and the more I examined it the more sceptical I became. Finally, the miner *cached* the "quarter" in a neighbouring tree rather than have his dogs freight it fifteen miles up the creek. A month later I again met the man, and, being interested in his dilemma, asked him what decision he had finally come to. He replied that his "beef" was really horseflesh, that it had been killed and frozen in the autumn for dog-feed, and that the butcher had sold it to him by mistake.



MINERS IN WINTER DRESS

The miners, as a rule, are hasty cooks, and this, in addition to the quality of their food, frequently results in scurvy; and in the Dawson Hospital during March 1898 there were forty-five sufferers at one time with scurvy. The symptoms are usually a tightening of the cords and muscles of the legs and a certain discoloration of the flesh, which loses its elasticity and refuses

to "fill out" after pressure. There have been no deaths in the Klondike from scurvy alone, but its complication with other diseases often results fatally. The cure lies in absolute rest and fresh food.

In the present over-populated condition of the Klondike there is very little opportunity for a poor



MAKING A TRAIL

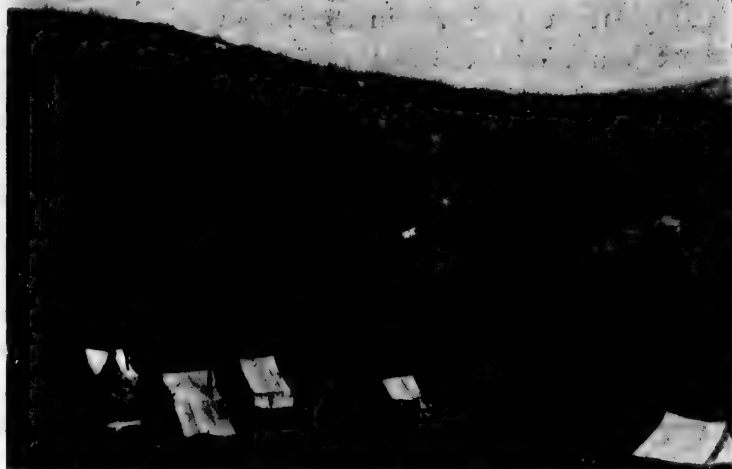
man to enter the mines and work out a fortune in a few years, as was done when the opportunities, in proportion to the inhabitants, were greater. An effort has been made by a certain writer to prove the Klondike to be a

"poor man's country," and although the effort has failed dismally, this writer still persists, in the face of overwhelming facts, in trying to prove that this supposition, which he conceived during his residence in the United States and before he had ever visited the Klondike, is true. The bare fact that it has taken, on an average, one hundred pounds (or five hundred dollars) to properly outfit a man and pay his expenses from the United States to the Klondike would indicate the falsity of the assertion that Klondike is

a "poor man's country," and when we consider the difficulty men experience in securing work under the present conditions, the fact that there are practically no unlocated claims of value to be had, and the additional fact that, in the event of failure either to get work or to stake a workable claim, the "poor man" would have to pay at least forty pounds (or two hundred dollars) to get from Klondike back to his home, we naturally conclude either that the "poor man" theory is a delusion or else that the "poor man" would first have been possessed of nearly two hundred pounds (or one thousand dollars) which he could afford to speculate with and take big chances of losing; in which case I believe this "poor man" would, in most countries of the globe, be considered a rich man.



A SLED WITH SAIL



HILL-SIDE CLAIMS OF GREAT VALUE

CHAPTER VII

Story of the Discovery of Gold in the Klondike—Ill-luck of the Real Discoverer—Luck of a Horse-dealer—Story of Claim Twenty-nine, El Dorado—Discovery of Gold on French Hill—Miners who Gave Money to Women in Dance-halls—Adventures of the Pelly Kid—Swiftwater Bill—Nigger Jim—Story of the Boy from Chicago—Goldy—The Theft of Four Thousand Pounds (or Twenty Thousand Dollars) in Gold Dust—Arrival of the News in Dawson of the Sinking of the *Maine*—Starving on the River—Story of the Discoverer of Miller Creek.

WHILE the credit for the discovery of gold in the Klondike is generally given to George Carmac, its actual discovery was due to the efforts of Robert Henderson, who entered the Yukon country in 1894. For several years Henderson prospected in the summer

months on the tributaries of the Upper Yukon, and spent the winters hunting game near Sixty-Mile Post, a trading station located fifty miles above the present site of Dawson. Among the rivers and creeks ascended by Henderson during 1895 was Indian River, which lies on one side of a low divide that separates it from the Klondike River. When Henderson entered Indian River it was late in the autumn, and there remained but a few weeks before the coming of the Arctic winter in which he could prospect for gold on the tributaries of this little river. But during this short time he succeeded in finding "colours" of gold on what is now known as Australia Creek, and thus were sown the seeds that eventually ripened into the great discovery in one of the tributaries of the Klondike.

Henderson remained on Australia Creek until October, living mainly by his rifle, until a shortage of flour and other staple provisions made it imperative for him to return to Sixty-Mile Post for a winter's outfit. Enthusiastic over the result of his find, he readily induced the store-keeper at Sixty-Mile to advance sufficient flour to keep him alive until the following spring. He then descended the Yukon, and entered the mouth of Indian River, but, instead of continuing on to Australia Creek, turned into Quartz Creek, a tributary of Indian River, entering it on the north side. Henderson prospected alone on this river all the winter, living upon the supplies he had obtained at Sixty-Mile Post and the moose and caribou he killed with his rifle. It might here be noted that, had this

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wandering prospector crossed a single range of hills, he would have descended into El Dorado Creek, one of the world's richest placer streams, any claim of which would have sold twelve months afterwards for from forty to one hundred thousand pounds (or from one hundred thousand to half a million dollars).

In the spring of 1896 Henderson crossed the mountain divide separating the tributaries of Indian River from those of the Klondike, and wended his way to the bed of the stream that had never before felt the tread of a white man. This stream, which is a tributary of Hunker Creek, itself a tributary of the Klondike River, is now known as Gold Bottom. Among the surface sands and gravels of this creek Henderson discovered the tiny particles of placer gold known to the miners as "colours," and, after working about four weeks, returned to Sixty-Mile Post for supplies. While visiting the trading-post Henderson induced three men to go with him to Gold Bottom, where they subsequently recovered from the wash gravels in the creek bed one hundred and twenty-five pounds (or about seven hundred dollars) in "dust" and nuggets.

When these operations were over Henderson again returned to Sixty-Mile Post for supplies, but upon his return to the mouth of Indian River found the stream so swollen that he could not ascend it. In view of this state of affairs, he drifted on down the Yukon to the mouth of the Klondike River, a distance of about twenty-five miles, where he met George Carmac, a white, who had spent many years among the Indian tribes along the river, and who, as will soon be seen,

eventually got the credit of making the original Klondike discovery.

At the time of Henderson's visit Carmac was engaged with a tribe of Lake Indians in fishing for salmon at the mouth of the Klondike River, and the skin tents in which they lived were erected upon ground that a few months later was worth eight thousand pounds (or forty thousand dollars) a corner lot. Previous to this time Carmac and some Indians had been living at Five Finger Rapids, where they had discovered a vein of coal, and they had gone to the Klondike only through the necessity of securing salmon and other fish for food. Henderson told Carmac that he had discovered gold on a creek on the Klondike side of the Indian River divide, and offered to take him to the spot so that he too might stake or "peg out" a claim. Carmac was anxious to go, but when he insisted on taking the entire tribe of Indians with him Henderson objected, and the two separated, Henderson to go to Gold Bottom by way of the Klondike River, and Carmac to follow, as best he could, with two of the Indians. Henderson reached Gold Bottom in the course of two days and went quietly to work. Carmac with his Indians proceeded up Rabbit Creek, now known as Bonanza, and camped on a spot where one of the Indians, called "Skookum Jim," discovered rich gold-bearing gravel in the bed of the creek, while Carmac lay sleeping on the banks. This was on August 16, 1896. The Indian washed pan after pan, only to find that each trial resulted better than the one preceding, and when Carmac awoke the Indian

had washed out several ounces of dust and small nuggets.

Carmac, realising the fabulous richness of the find, hastily staked a discovery claim, which, according to the Canadian laws, is twice the size of an ordinary claim, and the two Indians were given the claims next adjoining on the upper and lower sides. Carmac, completely ignoring the fact that Henderson, who was primarily the author of his sudden wealth, was at work on an inferior claim across a range of hills, and was certainly entitled to one of the rich claims, left for Forty-Mile Post without sending Henderson any information of the strike. When he arrived at the Post Carmac told the miners there of the great strike ; but, owing to the fact that he had previously claimed to have made discoveries, none of which had turned out successfully, the miners at first refused to listen to him. Presently, however, a stampede began for the new El Dorado, which was eventually to cause the abandonment and desertion of the mines and stores in and about Forty-Mile Post. A week later a second stampede came to the Klondike from the mines near Circle City, three hundred and eighty miles below Dawson ; and when Henderson, who was still on Gold Bottom, heard of the discovery on Rabbit Creek, he found that all the claims for fourteen miles had been taken up, and that El Dorado and the other tributaries were each staked to an average distance of two miles. Henderson was broken-hearted when the full force of his misfortune dawned upon him and he found that it was impossible for him to get possession of a good claim.

In October 1898 I came from Skagway, Alaska, to Seattle, Washington, on the South-bound steamer that brought Henderson back to "civilisation," after a four years' absence in the wilds of the North. During this voyage three thieves succeeded in stealing from Henderson a buckskin bag containing a hundred and sixty sovereigns (or eight hundred dollars) in gold, representing practically all his worldly possessions, so that when he landed in Seattle he was all but penniless. Through months and years of continuous hardship and threatened starvation, Henderson, by his individual efforts, had been primarily the cause of the wealth of more than a hundred men, yet at so late a date as October 1898 he was without either a place to eat or a place to sleep.

It may be added that the effect of the discovery of gold in the Klondike has caused a continued desertion of the camps at the head of Forty-Mile Creek and in the vicinity of Circle City, and, in many cases, the miners' cabins remain to-day as they were at the time of desertion. Clothing is left hanging on the walls; wood, already split for the stove, is piled up in the corners of the cabin; and cooking utensils may still be seen hanging by the stove.

In September 1898 I met a man named Rogers, who was quite as unfortunate as Henderson. A few days before the news of the discovery of gold on Bonanza Creek was generally known, Rogers landed one evening at the mouth of the Klondike to allow his boat-load of horses, which he was taking to Circle City to

use in packing to the mines, to graze on the swamp grass. During the evening he visited Carmac's Indian camp, and was told by Carmac's squaw that Carmac was up the river hunting for gold. Rogers took his departure the next morning, and stayed that night at Forty-Mile Post. During the night he complained to his men that the constant worry over the possible loss of the sale of his horses in Circle City had prevented him going to sleep, so at three o'clock in the morning they all arose, and, in the broad daylight peculiar to that latitude in the early summer mornings, cast off the lines and started on down the Yukon towards the lower mines. It subsequently was ascertained by Rogers that, at seven o'clock on the very morning he left Forty-Mile, Carmac arrived with the news of the discovery on Bonanza Creek. Rogers and his men sold their horses before Circle City was deserted, but, although they proceeded to Dawson as rapidly as possible, they were unsuccessful in their efforts to get possession of good claims.

One of the most astounding true stories of the fortunes of the different miners is that of Charles Anderson, who owns claim twenty-nine on El Dorado Creek. Anderson had been busily engaged in sluicing out gold on his claim on Miller Creek, a tributary of Forty-Mile, when the news came of the discovery on Bonanza Creek, and he was unable to join the stampede until some days after. When he reached Klondike, he found that there were no more available claims of promise, so he and others crossed the

summits, passing by the heads of Gold Bottom and Quartz Creeks, in an effort to reach a stream known as Too Much Gold. Their provisions gave out, and it became necessary for them to return to Dawson, where they arrived several days later, suffering somewhat from the effects of hunger. As he entered the camp, Anderson was met by two gamblers, who, after inducing him to take a drink of liquor, proposed to sell him for one hundred and sixty pounds (or eight hundred dollars) claim number twenty-nine, El Dorado Creek, about which nothing was then known. Anderson finally agreed to purchase the claim, and made an appointment to meet the owners the next morning. When he awoke on the following day he realised that an advantage had been taken of him, but, since he had given his word that he would purchase the property, he decided to stand by it. It so happened, within three months after this sale, that El Dorado was found to be the richest creek in the North, and for this small purchase price Anderson had been made the possessor of a claim out of which fifty thousand pounds (or a quarter of a million dollars) have already been taken, and scarcely a third of the claim has been worked. The writer was present when thirty-five thousand pounds (or one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars) in dust and nuggets were weighed out by Anderson in payment for claim number thirty-four, El Dorado Creek, the gold having been washed from the gravel on claim twenty-nine during May 1898. The gamblers who sold Anderson his first El Dorado property left Dawson in disgust, unable to bear the

continued jokes and proddings of their comrades. Unlike many other claim-owners on El Dorado Creek who have shown a willingness to reduce the price of wages of their miners whenever such a step was possible, Anderson has always paid the highest rate, which is six shillings (or one dollar and a half) per hour.

The discovery of the rich hill-side claims on French Hill was made by some wood-choppers, who were cutting fire-wood for use on the El Dorado Creek claims. These men were working on the hill-side when one of them discovered a bright nugget of gold among the pebbles laid bare by a tiny rivulet. Accepting the theory that the gold must have originally come from higher ground, these wood-choppers continued the search up the hill until they came to the level bench of French Hill. They sank a prospect shaft and, one evening, carried a pan of gravel to the cabin of Dan Sanders, who owned a fractional creek claim on El Dorado at the mouth of the French Gulch. Sanders "washed" the pan of dirt, and found rich prospects in nuggets and coarse gold, but told his visitors that the "pan" was of little value. Before the visitors left the cabin Sanders succeeded in buying their claim for one hundred dollars, and afterwards, in the darkness of the night, he climbed the hill and staked a second claim in his own name. A moderate estimate of the value of these claims would be ten thousand pounds (or fifty thousand dollars) each. The news of the discovery reached Dawson a few hours later, and within two days the entire hill was staked off in claims

in so disorderly a manner that the Gold Commissioner was unable to issue recording papers until the Government surveyors re-set the stakes after an actual survey.

Among those who were fortunate enough to secure locations on upper Boranza Creek were two young men, who, shortly after the wealth of the Creek was proved, sold their property for twelve thousand pounds (or sixty thousand dollars). To show that they were properly endowed with the liberal spirit, each man divided his share, six thousand pounds (or thirty thousand dollars), with his choice of the girls in the Dawson dance-halls. One of the women bought other mining property with a portion of her money, and finally left the Yukon in August 1898, carrying with her ten thousand pounds (or fifty thousand dollars).

About the time when the stampede from Circle City had spent itself, a few straggling miners and adventurers from the trading-posts of the Upper Yukon appeared on the scene and drove their "stakes" wherever an opportunity presented itself. Among the late-comers was a boy known among the miners as the "Pelly Kid." He had spent several months of the preceding winter with the Indians at Fort Selkirk, at the confluence of the Pelly River with the Yukon, and it is probable that through this temporary residence with the Pelly Indians he received the nickname of "Pelly Kid."

El Dorado had been staked to thirty claims when

the "Kid" reached the gold-fields, and, merely as a chance, he staked the next succeeding claim—number thirty-one. A few weeks later he was offered twenty pounds (or one hundred dollars) for the claim, and accepted it. It had originally cost three pounds (or fifteen dollars) to record the claim; consequently, his actual gain was precisely seventeen pounds (or eighty-five dollars). Shortly afterwards the wealth of this claim was revealed by prospect holes to be enormous, and it is valued at the present time as being worth anywhere from fifty to one hundred thousand pounds (or from a quarter to a half million dollars).

Later on the "Pelly Kid" staked and recorded a claim at the mouth of Bear Creek, which, as in the case of the El Dorado claim, he sold for practically nothing without taking the pains to prospect it. This claim also has turned out to be worth a mint of money, and the boy's loss in disposing of it was at least twenty thousand pounds (or one hundred thousand dollars).

As a fitting climax to two such exceptionally unfortunate deals, the "Pelly Kid" experienced a third "streak of bad luck" that has convinced him he was born under an unlucky star. Immediately after the sale of his Bear Creek property he bought an interest in a mining claim on Sulphur Creek, which is now rated as one of the five good creeks in the Klondike. He and his partners undertook to develop it, and began the work of packing provisions to the claim, a distance of forty miles. On the way over the boy became discouraged and implored his partner to return

the forty pounds (or two hundred dollars) he had paid for the interest. The partner gave him the money, and within two months the Sulphur Creek claim had a market value of six thousand pounds (or thirty thousand dollars). When the writer left Dawson in September the "Pelly Kid" was working for wages for a miner on Bonanza Creek.

An adventurer named W. F. Gates, widely known throughout the United States as Swiftwater Bill, entered the Yukon country in 1896, and reached Dawson about the time La Due was staking out the town-site. There were no unoccupied claims of promise to be had on the different creeks, so Gates and five or six associates leased fifty feet of ground on claim thirteen, El Dorado Creek, agreeing to give the owner fifty per cent. of the output. The value of El Dorado property was at that time practically unknown. Rich pay was struck almost upon the sinking of the first shaft, but Gates and his partners succeeded in keeping the news of this strike to themselves. Eventually they bought the claim for nine thousand pounds (or forty-five thousand dollars), and "worked out" the entire purchase money in a few months.

When Gates came into possession of a considerable sum of money he made a "triumphal tour" throughout the western part of the United States, the newspapers heralding him as a "Klondike Prince." He publicly offered to bet two hundred pounds (or one thousand dollars) with any man on the turn of a card, and, on one occasion, threw money into the streets of Seattle

from a window of a hotel. Afterwards he was married in San Francisco, and, when the newspapers eventually turned their praise to ridicule, "Swiftwater" returned to Klondike, having spent the greater portion of his money, but ready to go in search of more. "Swiftwater Bill" was never taken seriously in Dawson, and at present he is known throughout the camp as "Stillwater Willie."

The wealthiest man in the Klondike, or rather the one owning the greatest number of rich claims, is Alex McDonald, a Scotchman born in New Brunswick, who once won and lost a fortune speculating in Colorado mines. McDonald is a giant in physical strength, a typical prospector, and a thorough frontiersman. Prior to the discovery of the Klondike gold-fields he spent a year by himself in the wilderness of the unexplored Stewart River, prospecting for gold, completely isolated from the whites at the river trading-posts. At the time of the strike on Bonanza Creek McDonald was working a "lay" on a claim on Miller Creek, a tributary of Sixty-Mile, in American territory. He hastened to the scene of the late strike, and, by staking claims for himself, purchasing interests in others, mostly on "time," and buying up the privileges of other miners who did not care to stake for themselves, he acquired some of the most valuable known placer ground in the north. McDonald's fortune is variously estimated at from one to four million pounds (or five to twenty million dollars).

Another celebrity of the camp at Dawson is a man named Dougherty, but who is more universally known as "Nigger Jim." Dougherty staked on Upper Bonanza Creek, and his claim was among a group of three that were sold in November 1898 to the Cudahy Company of Chicago, for seventy-two thousand pounds (or three hundred and sixty thousand dollars). Dougherty's portion for this one sale was twenty-five thousand pounds (or one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars). During the following winter he attained considerable notoriety in the United States by spending money with a lavish hand. Unlike "Swiftwater Bill," Dougherty is a thorough miner, a pioneer of the Yukon, and popular among his fellow miners.

A newspaper correspondent, who was travelling through the Yukon district when gold was discovered in the Klondike tributaries, succeeded in getting possession of a claim on El Dorado Creek, but he unfortunately sold it before its immense value was known. Eventually, however, he secured good locations on Bear, Hunker, and Sulphur Creeks, and has won back probably as much as he lost by the premature sale of his El Dorado claim.

A boy, born in Chicago, and sent away from home because his conduct was thought by his father to be unbecoming the son of a minister, drifted down the Yukon just in time to stake a claim on Bonanza Creek during the first stampede. The claim realised large sums of money, which the boy squandered as fast as he

received them. The news of his good fortune finally reached the father, who made a hasty trip from Chicago to Dawson, only to find that the boy, upon hearing of the father's intended visit, had given his money and the claim to a girl in a dance-hall, and had departed for St. Michael's in a small boat. The father remained in Dawson three days, and then returned to the United States thoroughly disgusted—probably, however, more over the loss of the money than of the boy.

Among the gamblers who flocked to Dawson when the news of the strike became generally known in the United States was a man whose right name I never heard, although he was known throughout the camp as "Goldy." This man soon became known as the boldest and most persistent gambler about the place. He had exceptionally good luck during the early winter months, and was credited with having made a fortune of twelve thousand pounds (or sixty thousand dollars). Finally, however, his luck changed, and he lost five thousand pounds (or twenty-five thousand dollars) in a single night. His bad luck lasted for many months, until he lost everything, but, by a succession of lucky plunges, he finally managed to get control of another small fortune, and he is now enjoying the rather unstable prosperity of a fortunate gambler.

During the month of November 1898 a saloon or bar known as the Palace was robbed one night of four thousand pounds (or twenty thousand dollars) in gold. The gold had been left with the bar-tender for

safe keeping the night before by "Nigger Jim," and, as was the custom in the early mining days, the drawer containing the sacks of gold was unlocked. The thieves entered the building early in the morning, and experienced little difficulty in getting possession of the money. The affair remained a mystery for several days, when the man who committed the theft admitted his guilt in confidence to a friend named Nash. Nash in turn told "Nigger Jim," and the robber was arrested, tried, and sentenced to five years' hard labour in the Dawson barracks. "Nigger Jim" afterwards rewarded Nash for the part he had taken in the recovery of the lost gold by giving him enough money to begin business as a saloon-keeper.

The news of the sinking of the battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbour was brought to Dawson by a character known as the "Montana Kid," who had journeyed from Dawson to the sea-coast some months previously with a stolen dog-team. This traveller had brought in a supply of newspapers from the United States containing an account of the disaster, intending to sell them. But before the papers were placed on sale Judge McGuire and other public-spirited men conceived the idea of renting a deserted dance-hall, so that the news could be read to an audience and the proceeds given to the Dawson Hospital. This idea was carried out, and readings were held at seven, nine, and eleven o'clock of the same night, the hall being cleared between each reading and an admission fee of ten shillings (or two and a half dollars) charged each

time. The news caused widespread interest, mainly because the population was largely American, and the hall was always filled with listeners. A large sum was collected at these readings for the benefit of the hospital, and a small portion of the amount was given to the "Montana Kid" for supplying the original news. On the following day the "Montana Kid," after disposing of his papers, was sent down the Yukon River by the police, who agreed not to punish him for the theft of the dogs if he left the territory and remained away.

When I was on my way to the Klondike in October 1897 I met a party of men at Fort Selkirk, who discharged their firearms as we approached as a signal that they wanted us to land. We pulled in to the shore and found that the party consisted of four men, one of whom told us that he was Swiftwater Bill. The men were journeying from Dawson to the sea-coast, but they had miscalculated the amount of provisions they should have taken, and at the time we met them they had nothing to eat but about two quarts of rice and two dried salmon. To prove that he was the real thing, Swiftwater showed us a big sack of dust and nuggets, and then told of his rich claim on El Dorado. We were unwilling to accept money for the provisions they wanted, but we supplied them with enough to carry them through to the coast, and then accepted an order written by Swiftwater to his representative at Dawson, calling for the return of an equal amount of provisions. When we reached the Klondike, Swift-

water's representative honoured the order and gave us the amount of provisions we had advanced, although they cost him an average of four shillings (one dollar) a pound, and the sack of flour cost fifteen pounds (or seventy-five dollars).

The story of the discoverer of Miller Creek, a tributary of Sixty-Mile, in American territory, is a fair illustration of miners' luck. The stream was first ascended by Miller, who prospected with varying luck for several months. Finally he struck what he considered excellent pay, and staked the claim which he chose as the most favoured and the most "likely" of all the others on the creek. Afterwards a stampede occurred, and Miller Creek, which was soon proved to be very rich, was staked from head to foot. About that time the miners surveyed the claims, carefully measuring each one; and in the course of this work it became necessary to move the stakes of Miller's discovery claim, so that he did not possess the ground that he had originally chosen. This angered Miller, and it is said that he made a tearful appeal for his original claim—a request that was refused. Two months later, development showed that Miller's new claim was the very best one on the creek, and the one he had had to desert was probably the worst.



POLING A BOAT UP-STREAM IN SUMMER

CHAPTER VIII

Dogs as Beasts of Burden—Usefulness of a Dog-team to the Miner—Sleds and the Weight Dogs can Draw over the Ice—The Care of Dogs—Freighting to the Mines—Fortunes made in Freighting—Travelling over the Ice from Dawson to the Coast—Equipment for the Journey—Tales of Travellers—Reindeer—Horses and Mules in Klondike—Travel in Boats in the Summer—Navigation on the Yukon both above and below Dawson—Improvement in Steamer Service—White Pass Railway—The Steamer *Wille Irwin*.

UP to the present time the native dogs of the interior of Alaska and the North-West territories have furnished the only practical means of winter travel, and by their aid miners and travellers have been able to accomplish journeys of great length, entailing considerable hardship and privation, that otherwise could not have been made. Without a dog-team it is extremely difficult to



travel from one post to another over the ice and snow, and only once, when starvation stared the miners in the face, was an attempt made to reach the sea-coast, six hundred miles away, without the use of dogs. When the ice forms in the autumn and the miners begin the work of sledding their winter's supplies from the post to the mines, the dogs reach the climax of their usefulness. So much has been accomplished by dog-teams in the way of freighting supplies and firewood to the claims, that the present advanced state of development of the Northern mines is due largely to them.

An idea of the usefulness of a team of dogs to the miner in the Arctic may be had from a short *résumé* of a few of their winter's duties. To begin with, we will imagine that the ice is forming on the rivers and creeks and the miners are busy making preparations for the winter's work. A few days before the ice becomes strong enough to bear the weight of a sled, the miner puts the dogs in harness preparatory to a few days' training. This harness consists simply of a leather collar, a girth band, and a pair of traces, made either of leather thongs or strips of heavy canvas. The dogs are hitched in tandem fashion without lines, the traces of one being fastened to the traces of the dog following. A short single-tree, about a foot in width, receives the traces from the last dog, and is in turn lashed to the sled.

When the ice becomes solid enough to bear the weight of the sled, the dogs begin the work of hauling the winter's supplies up the creeks. This may take a

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week, or it may take three, depending, of course, upon the distance of the claim from the post and the quantity of supplies to be hauled. When this is finished the team is put to work hauling poles and logs from the mountain sides and from the neighbouring creeks for use in the mines. This work continues throughout



TEAM OF MALAMOOT DOGS

the winter, and it is varied only by an occasional trip to Dawson, where the claim-owner goes to transact business. When the mining season is over the dogs haul lumber from the saw-mills near Dawson to the claim, so that the flumes and sluice-boxes may be built for the spring clean-up. By the time the lumber is delivered the warm sun of spring has usually ruined the trails, so that sledding becomes impossible and the dogs are given a well-deserved vacation, which ends

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"PACKING" AND WEIGHT-DRAWING 191

rather abruptly again with the coming of the ice in the autumn. It not infrequently happens, however, that the cabins are not well enough stocked with provisions in the winter to last through the summer, so the miner, having no horse to "pack" his supplies, fastens stout canvas sacks on the backs of the dogs and gives each animal a small "pack" to carry up to the claim. The weight that a dog can carry in this manner varies, of course, with the size of the animals, and ranges anywhere from ten to forty and even fifty pounds. During the summer months it is a common thing in travelling along the different creeks to meet a man staggering under a pack of seventy-five or one hundred pounds, and followed by five or six dogs, each with a pack, and each one picking his way carefully through the swamps and between the rocks, evidently realising that an awkward fall might cause the ruin of his load.

The weight that may be drawn by a dog-team varies with the dogs themselves and the condition of the trail over which they are travelling. Under the most favourable circumstances, when the trail is in the very best condition, a team of five Malamoot or "Huskie" dogs will draw a thousand pounds, exclusive of the sled, a distance of fifteen to twenty-five miles in a single day. Ordinarily, however, the driver loads the sled in the proportion of about one hundred and sixty pounds to each dog. The best type of native dog will draw a given weight, of probably one hundred and seventy-five pounds, to a greater distance in a day's time than a man of average

strength, and the dog will be in better condition to repeat the performance on the following day than the man. In travelling over badly broken trails the net weight to be drawn by a dog-team is, of course, greatly reduced.

The miners and the men who make a business of



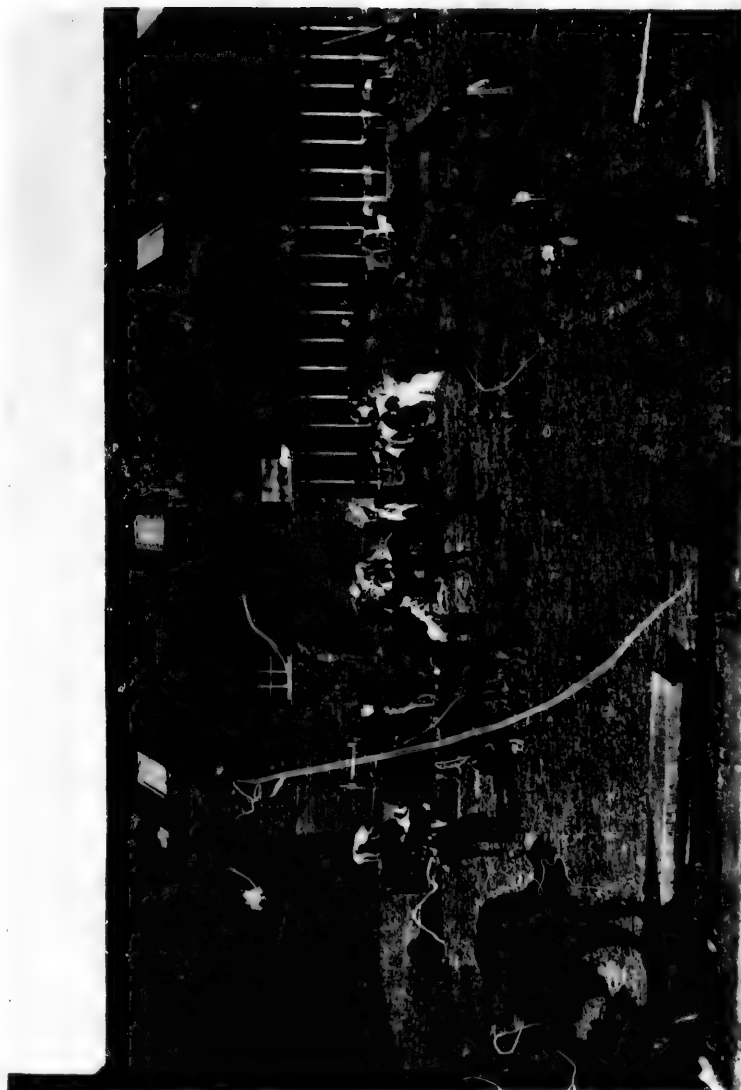
DOG-SLEDS

freighting with dog-teams are always in search of dogs that promise to make good leaders, because a well-trained leader is worth as much to the driver as any two dogs in the team. If he is trained properly and responds instantly to the commands of his master he relieves him of half the difficulty of running the team. A good leader will turn instantly to the right or to the left as the driver shouts "gee," or "haw," and when an extra effort is needed to draw the sled over an obstruction,

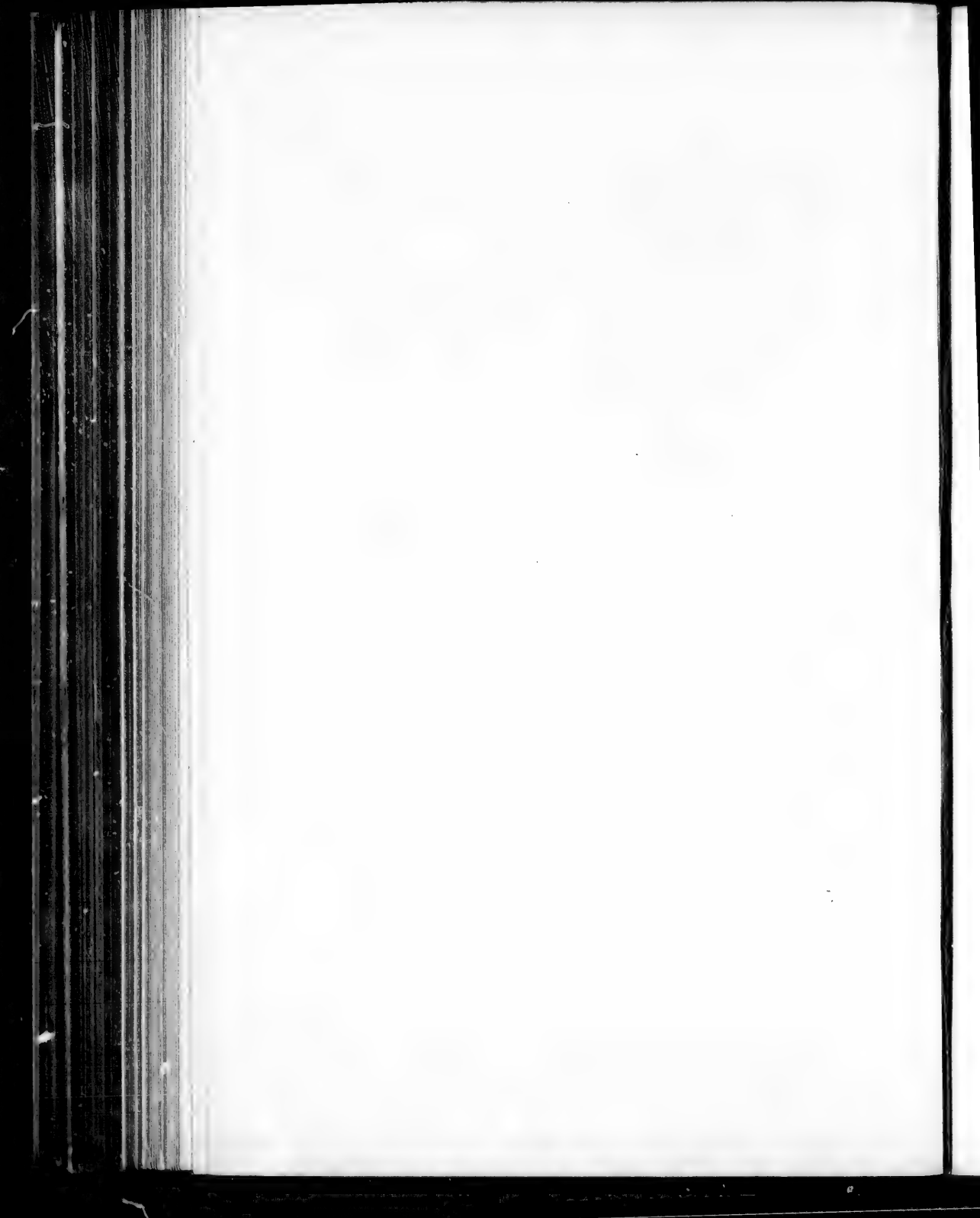
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DOGS FOR SALE AT SEATTLE



a word from the driver puts an energy and life into the leader that are instantly imitated by every other dog in the team. During the winter of 1897-98 good native leaders sold for sixty pounds (or three hundred dollars), and there were instances where nearly twice this sum was paid. An ordinary dog that would work anywhere in the "string" sold for forty pounds (or two hundred dollars), but often the price was much higher.

Besides the words "gee" and "haw," there are but two other words used by the drivers; one will bring the team to a sudden stop, and the other will cause them to start, or, if they are already in motion, to travel at a more rapid rate. The word used to accomplish this last is said to be a corruption from a French word, meaning "to march," but the universal pronunciation of the word in and about Dawson is, plainly and simply, "mush," and from morning until night, when dog-teams are used, one hears nothing but "mush, mush."

While they are being worked the dogs are usually fed on dried fish, and the Indians in and near the mines do a very profitable business during the summer catching salmon and drying them for use during the following winter. The price varies at different times and at different posts along the river from sixpence (or twelve cents) to four shillings (one dollar) a fish. A dog will usually eat two pounds of salmon a day, but if there is no salmon to be had, and he has to be fed on bacon and rice cooked together, he usually eats between three and four pounds a day. Whenever a

long journey is undertaken dried salmon is always carried for the dogs, because a given weight of fish will last a greater length of time than any other form of meat, one pound of dried King salmon being equal to five pounds of fresh meat. It is the universal custom among dog-drivers never to feed a dog either in the morning or at noon, but to give him all he will eat at night. This course is pursued because a dog after being fed becomes lazy and indolent and practically unfit for work. Sometimes, however, the more humane drivers give each dog a small piece of dried fish at noon, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

The men who were lucky enough to own dog-teams during the winter of 1897-98 made small fortunes by freighting supplies up the creeks until January, and then made the trip to the sea-coast, carrying private mails and light express. The price for carrying a letter was four shillings (or one dollar), and in addition to this revenue the drivers added to their wealth by taking as a passenger some mining man who was forced to go to the United States or Canada to transact business. The usual charge was one hundred pounds (or five hundred dollars) a passenger, and, although the price would indicate that the traveller was about to enjoy all the luxuries of a palace, he usually found that he was seriously mistaken. The payment of the money merely insured to the passenger the right to accompany the sled to the sea-coast, six hundred miles away, and the luxuries consisted simply in the rather doubtful pleasure of running behind the

sled for the entire distance. The driver of the team furnished the food for the trip, and usually did the cooking while in camp; but the "passengers" were always permitted to help make camp at night, cut wood, and make themselves generally useful. They had also to furnish their own robe and blankets for the trip.

In freighting to the mines the "dog-punchers," as they are vulgarly called about the camp, usually covered eighteen or twenty miles a day, although this distance was very often exceeded. It was a common thing for a man to drive a team from Lower Discovery, on Dominion Creek, to Dawson, a distance of about forty-five miles, in a single day, and when the men were freighting supplies from Dawson to the forks of El Dorado and Bonanza Creeks, a distance of about thirteen miles, they always made the round trip in one day. This would mean that for half the total of twenty-six miles a five-dog team would draw probably a thousand pounds of freight and afterwards go scampering back to Dawson on the dead run. In hauling heavy loads the dogs usually travel at the speed of a man while walking. They get greatly over-heated during this excessively hard work, and whenever the driver allows them a few moments' rest they throw themselves into the snow-drifts beside the trail, and, even when the cold is intense, never seem to suffer from the effects of the sudden chilling. In fact, during the half-hour's rest at noon, while the driver has stopped in some cabin along the trail to warm a cup of coffee and eat his lunch, the dogs curl up in the

snow and sleep as peacefully and as comfortably as though they were lying beside a fire. The cabins of the miners are always open to travellers, and one may go anywhere on the developed creeks without the least fear of having to spend the night in the cold. It is customary, however, and especially during the times when provisions are short, for the traveller to take with him his own food and blankets, which he carries strapped to his back. He always finds a welcome in the cabins, and should there be an unoccupied bunk he is offered the use of it. Otherwise, he spreads his blankets on the floor and makes himself as comfortable as possible.

It is interesting to note in the native dogs their proneness to attack each other when they are confused or frightened by an accident or unusual occurrence. This trait was illustrated on the night of the Fourth of July 1898, when there was a general fusillade of shots from guns and revolvers fired along the main street of Dawson. Instantly the native dogs took fright and rushed recklessly up and down the streets in large bands. These bands would meet, a collision would take place, and then a general fight would ensue. The fusillade of fire-arms kept up, and this, together with the cries and shouts of hundreds of men, who lined the streets convulsed with laughter, watching the curious spectacle, urged the dogs to greater effort, until, finally, many of them ran away into the hills or swam across the Yukon mad with fright.

At another time, when a scow was wrecked in White Horse Rapids, two Indian dogs that were tied to the

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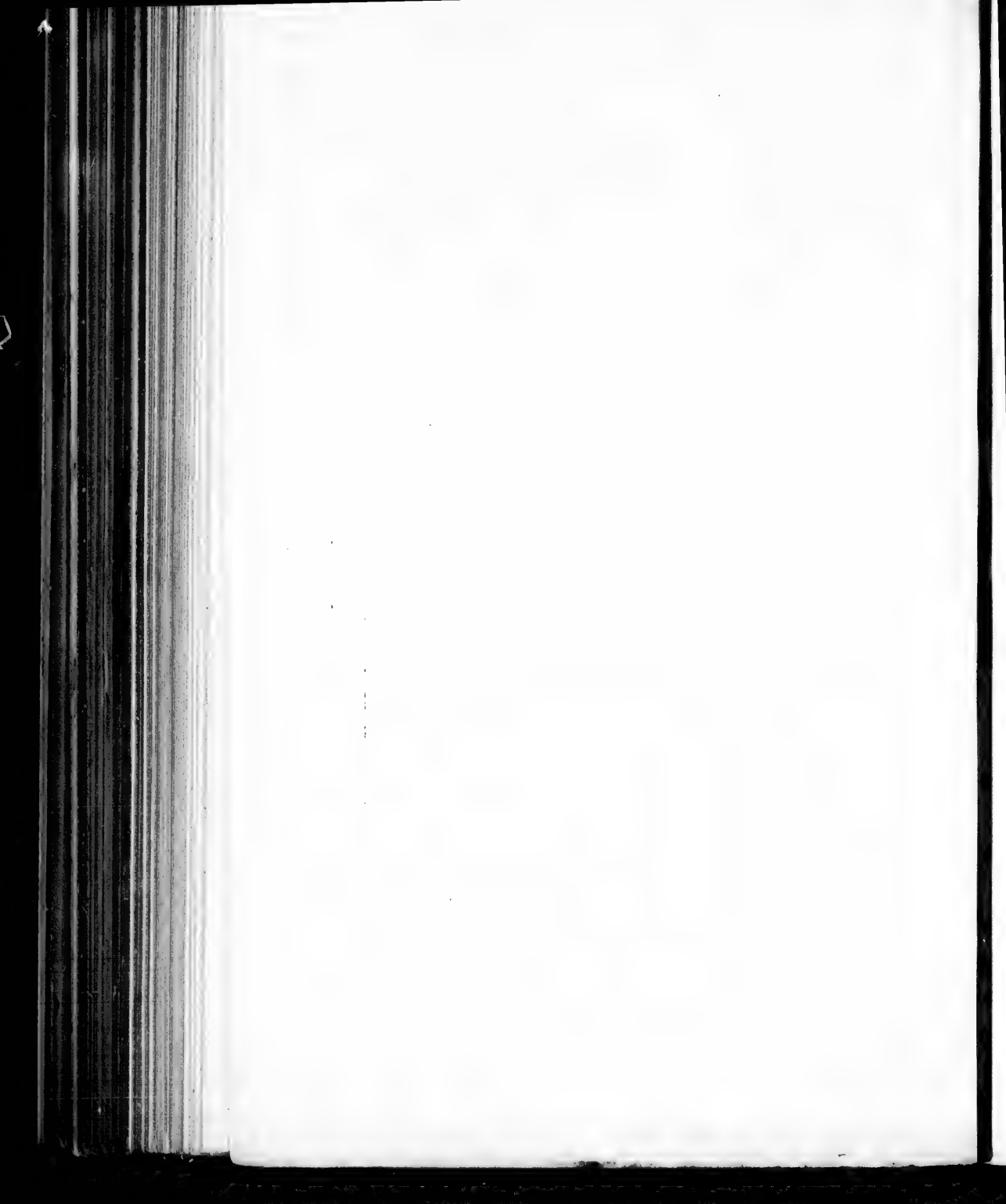
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boat fought one another furiously until the rescuing party that took the men and women from the sinking boat beat the dogs into silence.

While the writer was ascending the Yukon River once, our little steamer was overtaken by another small steamer, which ran alongside for half an hour. On the pilot-house of the second steamer were chained five Malamoot dogs, and when the steamer's whistle blew the confusion and fright among these animals was such that a fierce fight ensued, and lasted until the passengers separated them.



PACKING SUPPLIES ON DOGS

The men who freighted supplies to the mines often made twenty pounds (or one hundred dollars) a day ; but the net average day's receipts would, of course, be considerably less. During the spring of 1898, when there was a rush to get lumber to the claims for sluice-boxes, the price increased to one shilling and threepence (or thirty cents) a foot, which would be sixty

pounds (or three hundred dollars) a thousand feet. While these exorbitant rates prevailed, the owners of dog-teams made, on an average, thirty pounds (or one hundred and fifty dollars) a day. An illustration of the imperativeness of the demand for, and the difficulty of securing sluice-lumber, nails, &c., may be had from the experiences of Mr. R. B. Wood, the Superintendent of Claim Number Four, below Discovery, on Bonanza Creek. Mr. Wood, being unable to get the lumber hauled from Dawson by the already overworked teams, bought a set of five dogs for two hundred pounds (or one thousand dollars), and employed a man to drive them. The lumber cost fifty pounds (or two hundred and fifty dollars) a thousand feet at the mill on the Klondike River, and so great was the demand that the purchasers were forced to stand by and take the boards as they came from the saw and load them immediately on the sled. When Mr. Woods got the lumber for the claim, it became necessary to send the dog-team to Forty-Mile Post, fifty miles away, to get nails, the supply in Dawson having long since been exhausted. The driver succeeded in getting two kegs of nails, weighing one hundred pounds each, at a cost of about fifteen shillings (or three and one-half dollars) a pound. The two hundred pounds cost one hundred and forty sovereigns (or seven hundred dollars). In many instances it was impossible for the small saw-mills to furnish lumber for sluice-boxes, and the miners were forced to saw boards with whip-saws from the largest logs they could find.

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made in the winter time, is one full of hardship and privation, and should be only undertaken by men of hardy, robust health. The route followed is precisely the same as the one used in going into the Klondike country when the rivers and lakes are free from ice. When three men travel together, from four to six dogs and one or two sleds, coupled together, are usually sufficient to transport the camp equipment. The outfit necessary for such a journey consists of fur robes, blankets, a small tent, and a small sheet-iron stove, food and cooking utensils for the men, and a good supply of dried salmon for the dogs. The weight of all these articles is carefully reduced to the actual minimum, so that the load to be drawn by the dogs is as small at the start as it possibly can be. When everything is in readiness the sleds are loaded, a canvas tarpaulin is lashed securely over each one, two pairs of snow-shoes are fastened in a place where they can be easily reached, and the caravan begins its tedious journey coastwards. Until the present winter, 1898-99, the travel on the Yukon River was so light that each succeeding team had to break its own trail, but the increase of travel has now been such that a fairly well-defined path may be followed all the way. Wherever fresh snow obliterates the trail and makes it difficult for the dogs to proceed, travellers go ahead on snow-shoes and break a trail over which the dogs have little difficulty in following. The Yukon River freezes rough, and presents a surface that consists mainly of a mass of tilted ice-blocks, and the narrow trail made by the dog-sleds winds in and out between these in a

tortuous, serpentine way, making it difficult to discern the trail after a fall of snow.

The distance covered on the ice of the Yukon in a day's travel is ordinarily twenty-five miles, making it necessary for the travellers to spend from twenty-five to thirty days in journeying from Dawson to the sea-coast. At the beginning of the trip the dogs travel much more slowly than at the finish, because they have a much greater load to draw at first, and when they encounter the smooth ice on the upper lakes from which the wind has usually blown the snow, the sled moves over the surface with little or no friction. It is customary to abandon one of the sleds on the trail after about two-thirds of the journey has been completed, because the weight in provisions and dog feed has been so reduced as to make it possible to proceed with only one. Each night the travellers camp wherever darkness overtakes them, clearing a space, perhaps, in two feet of snow to make a suitable spot on which to pitch the tent. There is, of course, no running water, so that it is always necessary to melt snow and ice before meals can be prepared.

The garments worn by the travellers on these journeys consist, in addition to the usual clothing, of a fur "parkie," a drill "parkie," a fur cap covering the ears and neck, several extra pairs of moccasins and heavy moose-skin mittens lined with a piece of blanket. The fur "parkie" is really a fur coat, but made like a sweater, the traveller drawing it over his head when putting it on or taking it off. Furs, however, are

usually found too warm while the men are travelling, and a substitute for the fur is had in the "parkie," made precisely like the fur parkie, but of a material called drilling. The drill "parkies" serve to break the wind, or still air, as the case may be, and give the same results as the heavier fur. At night and in the morning, however, when the travellers are in camp, it is necessary to wear the furs.

The fastest trip between Dawson and Skagway during the winter of 1897-1898, was made by Robert Insley, who drove six well-trained dogs, and made the journey in sixteen days. Tom O'Brien, one of the pioneers, who owns one of the best dog-teams in the North, made the trip during the same winter in eighteen days. While on the trail Insley travelled on an average forty miles a day.

The longest journey ever made on the Yukon River, and one that illustrates very well the wonderful endurance of the native dogs, was made during the same winter by Jack Carr, formerly a United States mail carrier in Alaska. Carr was frozen in September 1897 near St. Michael's, at the mouth of the Yukon River. When the ice formed, and the snow partially filled the crevices between the frozen ice masses, Carr started with six dogs on a journey to Dawson, eighteen hundred miles up the river. The trip had never before been undertaken, and Carr was forced to break trail the entire distance. At first he had an Indian companion, but the man became exhausted after ten days' travel, and stopped for the remainder of the winter at an Indian camp near Anvik. Carr continued the

journey alone, and finally reached Dawson several months afterwards, having lost two dogs on the ice through exhaustion. When he reached Dawson, Carr determined to continue on to the sea-coast, where he arrived twenty-two days later, having followed the Yukon from its mouth to its source, a total distance of about twenty-four hundred miles, with no other companion than his Indian dogs.

A traveller named Wilson made two round trips from Dawson to Seattle during the same winter, and exhibited a marvellous power of endurance. Wilson left Dawson in November, and was the first traveller to reach the coast that winter. A few weeks later he was returning on the steamship *Corona*, when that vessel sank on the Alaskan Coast, and he was forced to return to Seattle for another supply of newspapers. He reached Dawson in March, sold the newspapers at eight shillings (or two dollars) apiece, and, within ten days after his arrival, started again for the coast, taking but two dogs, and going without either tent or stove. When he reached White Horse Rapids the snow on the trails had melted, so that sleds were useless; he therefore sold his dogs, threw away his blankets, and proceeded on foot, carrying nothing but his letters and a little food. The distance between White Horse Rapids and Skagway is about one hundred and twenty-five miles, which Wilson traversed in five days. He returned to Dawson a few weeks later, floating down the river in a small boat immediately behind the ice-jam.

A. D. Nash, one of the best travellers in the North,

has made the trip from Forty-Mile Post and Dawson to the sea-coast every winter for five years, and during the spring of 1898 made the journey between Dawson and Skagway in eighteen days. Nash usually takes with him seven dogs and two men, carrying seventy-five pounds of provisions for each man and sixty pounds of salmon for each dog. These men take four fur robes, but no blankets, a small tent, and a stove built so that it telescopes and weighs only six pounds. The cooking outfit consists of two frying-pans, three small stew-pans, and a tin plate, tin cup, and spoon for each man. Pocket-knives are used for table-knives, and the spoons serve in place of forks. Nash has a birch sled with basket sides for convenience in loading, and uses brass runners instead of steel. When not trying to make a remarkably fast trip, Nash and his men usually stop over every fifth day to bake bread, and, whenever the camp is near the Indian wigwams, they generally get a supply of fresh moose and caribou meat. The provisions taken by Nash consist of oatmeal, bacon, flour, beans, dried fruit, rice, sugar, canned milk, and tea. Tea has been found by the travellers of the North to be preferable to either coffee or cocoa, and dough-nuts are considered better to travel on than bread.

During the winter of 1896-97 Mr. Nash nearly lost his life while on a journey between Forty-Mile Post and Juneau. No dog-teams had preceded him through the Yukon wilderness that winter, and for forty-seven days he was forced to break trail through a heavy fall of snow. The provisions ran short, and there were no

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settlements along the river where additional supplies could be obtained. The dog-feed was practically exhausted when the team reached Big Salmon River, and between there and Lake Le Barge four of the animals died from starvation and exhaustion. Fortunately, Nash secured enough meat at the lake to keep the dogs alive for fifteen days, but during that time he had only half rations for himself. Finally he reached the coast in an exhausted condition, only to find that there were no boats running between Dyea and Juneau, and, after resting for a week in the camp of the Dyea Indians, he proceeded on foot along the mountainous shores ninety miles to Juneau.

The miners in early days were in the habit of naming a creek or a trading-post from the distance intervening between it and one of the older posts, and also, for the want of any other name, in calling certain rivers by their estimated length. At one time there was a post called Fort Reliance on the Yukon River which was located only ten miles below the present site of Dawson, and this place was frequently the headquarters for miners who prospected for gold in the different streams during summer, and then lay idle during winter. When gold was discovered on Forty-Mile Creek, it was so named because it was forty miles down the Yukon from Fort Reliance, and Sixty-Mile Post was sixty miles up the Yukon River. In journeying to the sea-coast these miners had crossed the different lakes and streams, some of which had no name, so, in referring to the stream forming the outlet of Lake Le Barge, they called it Thirty-Mile River because it was about

thirty miles long ; and the connecting stream between Lakes Tagish and Marsh, being estimated by them to be six miles in length, was called Six-Mile River. The distances ordinarily given in the North are always approximate, although the list of distances on the Yukon River given elsewhere is said to have been the result of certain surveys made by Government engineers.

Snow-blindness is a source of considerable trouble to travellers, and sometimes the attack is excessively painful to the victim. It is seldom experienced during the winter months, because the days are dark and there is little sunlight, but in the spring—in March and April and May—when the sun is again on the ascension, the effect of the intense glare reflected from the melting snow surfaces upon the eyes is blinding. These attacks sometimes last a week, during which the patient remains in the darkened cabin, often writhing in agony. The eyes are usually weak for months after a severe attack of snow-blindness, and there are also other bad results. The prevention of snow-blindness lies in wearing blue or smoked glasses, and the usual remedy applied while the attack lasts is a poultice of fresh tea-leaves.

The native dogs of the North-West are divided into several classes—the Huskie, the Malamoot, and the Siwash. The Huskie originated, I believe, with the Indians of the Porcupine and McKenzie Rivers. They are very large, with long greyish hair and sturdy, stocky legs. These dogs are half timber-wolf, and many of them resemble wolves rather than dogs. The Malamoot is a smaller dog, as hardy as the Huskie, but

not so powerful. The colour of the Malamoot is usually black mixed with white. The Siwash is the ordinary coast Indian dog, smaller than the Malamoot, and not so valuable either for freighting or for long-distance travelling. The Siwash dogs are used almost entirely by the Indians, who harness them to sleds by attaching a single cord from the collar. In this manner the Indian will sometimes have thirty or forty dogs fastened to the front and sides of the sled, upon which he rides in savage ease and comfort.

During the early rush from Circle City to Dawson in the winter of 1896-97, Jack Dodson, a Circle City miner, started with three Siwash dogs and seven hundred pounds of freight for the new El Dorado. Dodson took twenty days' provisions, but the difficulties of the trail made it impossible to accomplish the journey in less than thirty days. When they arrived at Eagle City the men were entirely without provisions, and were forced to live on the dried salmon ordinarily given to the dogs. The snow got deeper as they proceeded up the river, and the dogs became so weak through lack of food that they were unable to pull the sled unless the trail was broken ahead of them. To hasten the work, one of the party would travel ahead on snow-shoes for a distance of about four miles, while the others would follow with the dogs drawing one of the sleds with half the load. Then one of the travellers would retrack with the dogs and bring up the remaining sled with the provisions, while the other travellers were engaged in breaking the next four miles of trail.

The dogs native to the interior of the North-West very naturally withstand the hardships of the extremely cold winters much better than dogs imported from the United States. It is also noticeable that the native dog has very little affection for his master, and is absolutely useless as a watch-dog. He never bites and he never barks, but he howls in such a way that it will make one's blood freeze unless a prolonged acquaintance with the sound has calmed one's nerves.

Several years ago the United States Government, with a view to improving the existing methods of

winter travel in Alaska, imported spotted reindeer from the coast of Siberia and established breeding and training stations at Point Barrow, on the Arctic coast, and at Bettler Post, on the Lower Yukon River. The reindeer were brought across the Behring Sea by the revenue-cutter *Bear*, which customarily cruised about the northern waters in summer to protect the sealing interests. The Siberian natives were at first strongly opposed to the exportation of the animals, because of a superstition they had to the effect that, if any spotted animal was



A REINDEER SLED

carried from their country to another, all the remaining animals of that particular species would die. It took some time for the officers and men of the *Bear* to secure the reindeer they wanted, but they finally succeeded, and now there are two herds in Alaskan territory, each of considerable size. An effort has been made to bring them into general use by the miners, but no practical results have ever been secured, and the experiment is considered a failure. The reindeer live on a white moss that grows near the summits of the mountains, and a supply of this could easily be gathered in summer to last the deer through the winter. However, the miners are so accustomed to the use of dogs that it is difficult to induce them to accept the reindeer as a substitute. Men who have travelled with deer say that they occasionally become obstinate while in harness, and they strike at the drivers with their sharp fore-hoofs. In such cases the men throw the deer to the ground by grasping their horns, and after this punishment the animals are again docile.

Until the summer of 1898 very few horses and mules were taken into the mining district of the Yukon River, and these have practically been the only rivals of the dog-teams. Horses were taken down the Yukon River to Circle City in the few years before the strike in the Klondike, and used to pack supplies to the mines, but they were killed in the autumn, because there was no winter feed to be had. During the winter of 1897-98 there were a dozen or more horses in and about Dawson, and they were used to good effect

hauling freight up the different creeks. These horses stood the severity of the winter climate very well, but the general opinion prevails that the usefulness of a horse in that locality must necessarily be limited to a period of two or three years.

In the summer the owners of the horses cut wild hay



A KLONDIKE RIVER SCENE

on the meadows of the Klondike and Indian Rivers, and rafted it down to Dawson, where it was stored for winter use. A few men who were fortunate enough to foresee an unusual demand for freighters during the coming winter spent several weeks during the autumn cutting hay on the natural meadows, and these men were successful in September in selling it for one hundred pounds (or five hundred dollars) a ton

When the hay gave out horses were sometimes fed on flour, which was made into a kind of bread, but the animals were, of course, unable to do any work on this kind of food. When winter came on, one of the Commercial Companies in Dawson had a good span of horses which they were unwilling to kill. They had no hay, and, as there was none to be bought, they decided to feed the horses with flour so that they might be kept alive till grain could be brought in from the sea-coast. The horses finished the winter in excellent condition, and, in the spring, were considered the best team in the camp. The flour upon which they were fed had a varying value during the winter of from one to twenty pounds (or five to one hundred dollars) a sack.

There are now several hundred horses and mules in Dawson, and it is expected that they will do a great deal of the freighting formerly done by dog-teams.

A man who had seven horses in Dawson during the winter of 1897-98 made a fortune of four thousand pounds (or twenty thousand dollars) in three months, and several others, who had fewer horses, did as well in proportion. An idea of how such an enormous sum could be made may be gained from these figures : The rate for freighting supplies from Dawson to El Dorado Creek, a distance of about thirteen miles, was fivepence (or ten cents) a pound. A horse could easily draw a thousand pounds at a time, earning twenty pounds (or one hundred dollars) in two days for the owner. The seven horses would, therefore, earn one hundred

and forty pounds (or seven hundred dollars) in two days.

In September 1898 I met a man in Dawson who had brought four horses down the river during the preceding summer, intending to haul freight to the mines in winter. But, after considering the prospects for freight, he decided to accept an offer of three hundred pounds (or fifteen hundred dollars) for the four horses. The man who bought them left Dawson for the United States eight months afterwards with twenty-five hundred pounds (or twelve thousand five hundred dollars) as the result of the winter's freighting, while the man who sold them left with practically nothing.

When the summer's sun unlocks the ice-bound rivers and lakes from the grasp of the Arctic winter, sleds and snow-shoes are laid aside, and long, narrow, poling-boats are placed in the stream to take their places as the means of travel. These boats are used by the miners in travelling up and down the Yukon River from one post to another, and also to take freight up the navigable tributaries to a point located as near as possible to the mines.

Poling-boats are built to an unusual length in proportion to their breadth, and are always sharp at both ends. The unusual speed of the waters of the northern rivers makes it imperative that boats, especially for upstream work, should be built on lines offering the least resistance to the swift currents, and, at the same time, have sufficient breadth to keep them from capsizing too readily. The length of these boats is ordinarily

twenty-eight or thirty feet, with a breadth of from two and a half to three feet. To propel them through the water two men, each having a long pole, one standing in the bow and one in the stern, sink the poles simultaneously in the water, and then when bottom is reached throw their weight against the pole in such a way as to force the boat rapidly through the water. The distance that three men who understand poling may travel with a boat of this description in a day's time is very much greater than could be accomplished if oars were used instead of poles, the secret of the success of the pole mode of propulsion being, of course, the fact that those who pole have the extra advantage of working against solid ground, instead of the swiftly moving waters ordinarily encountered by oars.

The journey to the sea-coast is often undertaken by expert polers, who make the trip from the Klondike to the head of Lake Bennett in about five weeks' time. Usually three men go together, and while two are using the poles the third man is resting. These boats on leaving Dawson generally begin the journey by following along the east side of the river as far as possible, and when steep, rocky bluffs are encountered, where the current is swift and the water deep, the boat is rowed across the river with the oars, and then the journey is continued on that bank until it becomes necessary to recross again. Men who are expert with the poles can keep a boat at a uniform distance of a few feet from the shore with a skill that is really remarkable, and when swift water is encountered an

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ASCENDING THE YUKON



adept poler will navigate his craft with as great ease and precision as though it were a steam launch with exceptional power. In making the journey to the coast travellers carry, in addition to their blankets and provisions, an extra piece of canvas, so that when the lakes are reached they will be able to utilise any available winds in sailing.

Occasionally travellers ascend the river with a light bark canoe in which is carried the camping outfit. One of the men walks along the shore keeping the nose of the canoe away from the bank with a light pole which is made fast to the bow, while his companions travel ahead at the end of a fifty-foot line, drawing the frail craft behind them canal-horse fashion. The canoes are light and offer very little resistance as they move along on the water, and they are taken merely to carry the camp outfit and to be used in crossing streams when such a course becomes necessary. Twenty or twenty-five miles a day is considered a very good day's work for three men travelling with a bark canoe.

In early days, before the Commercial Company put steamers on the Yukon River and began to do a general trading business with the Indians and miners, it was customary for the lone prospectors to journey in poling-boats to Juneau, Alaska, on the sea-coast, for their next winter's outfit of provisions, a practice that has now been abandoned. But even as late as the autumn of 1897 men were forced to ascend the river in this way in order to get out from the interior before the winter set in.

Since the discovery of gold in the Klondike, navigation on the Yukon River has advanced from the most primitive to almost the most perfected system. In early days the steamers were very small, with comparatively weak power, and, during the flood seasons in the spring of the year, were unable to ascend the



STEAMER TOWING BARGE TO DAWSON

Yukon except by following the banks after the fashion of the poling-boats. But these primitive trading-steamers have given way within the last twelve months to a fleet of magnificent vessels

that rival the famous Mississippi boats in size, power, and elegance. In fact, the company that owns the improved fleet imported Mississippi pilots and captains, and even builders to construct the boats at St. Michael's on Mississippi plans and models, so that, even to the electric lights and the cabin appointments, these steamers are essentially the same as those found on the "Father of Waters." There are other new steamers on the river, and, as far as the Lower Yukon or St. Michael's route is concerned, navigation in a wonderfully short time has reached an excellence

that two years previously had not even been thought of.

Navigation on the Lower Yukon is rendered rather difficult on the flats below Circle City and at the Ramparts, where the river narrows considerably and runs with a greatly accelerated speed. On the flats, located near the point where the Yukon intercepts the Arctic Circle, the river spreads out to a breadth of many miles, and flows between hundreds of low bars and islands. The river is divided into many small streams, making it difficult for the pilots to find a channel through which large steamers can pass. When the channel is once found, a pilot is stationed at the flats, during the season when navigation is open, to take the company boats safely through, but when the spring floods come the channels are changed, making it necessary for a new one to be found each succeeding season. Efforts have been made from time to time to get the United States Government to dredge out a permanent channel across the flats, but it is doubtful if the Government will ever make an appropriation to carry out this work, because the flats are situated so close to the boundary line that the advantages would very naturally be reaped by the Canadian towns on the upper river rather than by the settlements in the American territory. At the Ramparts, where the currents are swift, it is often necessary for a steamer to tie up at the bank every ten or fifteen minutes so that an extra pressure of steam may be raised.

In the spring of 1898 the people of Dawson were greatly surprised one day by the appearance of a small

boat that came steaming down the Yukon with flags flying and whistle blowing. She was a stern-wheel vessel, and was the first steamer that ever came from the upper lakes, or shot through Miles Canyon and the famous White Horse Rapids. But the steamer *Willie Irwin* had demonstrated the fact that navigation by steam on the upper river was a practical possibility, and her pioneer voyage was the forerunner of a complete revolution that must sooner or later have taken place in the then existing shipping conditions.

During the following summer the *Willie Irwin* made a great many trips from Dawson to White Horse Rapids, passing safely through Rink and Five Finger Rapids on the way, and landing her passengers where, after crossing a five-mile portage round White Horse Rapids and Miles Canyon, they could take a connecting steamer that carried them up Fifty-Mile River and across the mountain lakes to the head of Lake Bennett. Other small steamers followed the example of the *Willie Irwin* until, when winter set in, there was quite a fleet of small craft plying between Dawson and White Horse Rapids on the Upper Yukon. These steamers had no difficulty in going through the intermediate rapids, but the larger ones were forced to use ropes to take them between the immense rocks that block the channel at Five Fingers. This was accomplished by making a line fast to a tree above the rapids, and, attaching the loose end to a log, which was allowed to float through the rapids to the steamer. The rope was then picked up and wrapped round the capstan, and when the steamer lost her power,

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because the wheel sank too low in the swift water, a dozen passengers and deck hands drew her slowly through by means of the capstan.

Several new companies have now been formed to build small steamers, having fair accommodation and ample power, for the upper river service, so that the journey from Dawson to the head of Bennett may be made in about five days, and Seattle may be reached in nine or ten days.

Besides passengers and freight these steamers will carry the mails during the summer months, and it is very probable that practically no passengers will travel by way of St. Michael's and the Lower Yukon after these little vessels are placed in commission. A great deal of freight has already been taken to points on the Yukon River by way of the upper river route, and it is likely that the total amount will gradually increase from year to year as the service is improved.

A railroad is being built from Skagway across White Pass to the head of Lake Bennett, and this will greatly facilitate the transportation of passengers and freight from the sea-coast to the head waters of the Yukon River. The intention of the builders is to eventually extend the road to Dawson; and in November 1898 the rails had been laid for fourteen miles, or within a few miles of the summit of the pass, and an accommodation train was making two trips a day over the line. The road will be built so that it may have a branch running into Atlin Lake, the scene of the latest strike. When this railway is in a position to run trains from the

sea to Lake Bennett, a distance of about forty-five miles, and the new fleet of upper river steamers is making regular trips from the lakes to White Horse Rapids, and from the Rapids on to Dawson, then the fate of the lower river as a passenger route will be sealed, and a large percentage of the freight trade it now enjoys will be lost to the vessels of the newer fleet.

The steamer *Willie Irwin*, the pioneer of the Upper Yukon fleet, was built of California wood, exceptionally strong and braced throughout with natural oak knees. All the material used in her construction, including the engines and boilers, was sledded over the mountain summits during the winter season of 1897-98, and fitted together on the lake. When the ice broke, her owner, Captain Barrington, an experienced river man, piloted her safely across the lakes and down Sixty-Mile River to the head of Miles Canyon, through whose perpendicular walls and turbulent waters no steamer had ever passed. Four sweep oars, two at the bow and two at the stern, were put in place, and, when all was ready, Captain Barrington, who stood on top of the pilot house directing the use of the sweeps, ordered the engineer to go ahead under full steam, great headway being necessary to keep her under control of the sweeps. The *Willie Irwin* passed through in safety, amid the cheers of hundreds of adventurers who watched her from the walls of the Canyon, and continued on through Squaw Rapids and the famous White Horse Rapids without accident. About twelve persons were aboard

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when she made the perilous run. Captain Barrington piloted the little steamer during all the following summer, but when the fall came, and after he had made a comfortable fortune, he contracted malarial-typhoid fever in Dawson, and died after a few days' illness.



INDIAN GRAVES AT FORT SELKIRK

CHAPTER IX

The Indians of the North—Troubles with the Coast Tribe—Burning of Fort Selkirk—An Indian Feud—Habits of Dress and Certain Other Characteristics—Their Fondness for Sugar and Tobacco—Camp Life—Work Accomplished by the Missionaries—Lower River Indians—Canoes and Snowshoes—Lieutenant Lowe's Experiences—Indian Murderers—Occasional Famines—"Present Day"—Winter Travel—An Indian Legend.

THE Indian of the North is essentially the Indian of the United States with perhaps a slight difference in certain habits and customs that the severity of the northern winters has rendered imperative. He has the same roving disposition, the same cunning and cruelty when at war with his neighbour, the same skill and physical endurance when in pursuit of game, the same

extreme laziness when enjoying the luxury of camp life, and the same supreme contentedness with existing conditions. In physical appearance the men of the northern tribes are an intermediate step between the most hardy of the southern Indians and the dwarfed Eskimo of the North. They are more peaceably inclined than were the American Indians towards the white travellers, who are always permitted either to traverse their territory or live among them without fear of being molested. Members of the more intelligent tribes have accepted the offer of partial education from the missionaries, and they have the characteristics of the southern Indians in imitating the dress of the whites with whom they come in contact. Drunkenness among the Indians is a rare occurrence, but this condition is due probably to the fact that the law prohibits the whites from furnishing them with liquor, and not to a lack of desire on their part to drink the liquor when it is obtainable. The different tribes occupy territory that is distinctly their own, and one band will never trespass on the hunting- or fishing-grounds of a neighbouring tribe. The Indian tribes of the interior of the North-West Territories are always on unfriendly terms with the Coast Indians, whom they will not allow to cross the dividing chain of mountains and enter the interior. It sometimes happens, however, that a Coast Indian will occasionally find his way down the Yukon River in company with the whites, and will complete the journey without molestation from the interior tribes.

Tradition says that many years ago a fierce war was

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waged between the Chilcoot Indians and the tribes on Lake Le Barge, and that since that time neither one has been permitted to traverse the other's territory.

In 1852 the Hudson Bay Company erected a trading-post at the confluence of the Pelly and Lewis Rivers, and named it Fort Selkirk. Two years later the Chilcoot Indians came in from the sea-coast, and, after

making themselves drunk on the liquor at the fort, burned it to the ground, and the few white traders who were stationed there barely escaped death. This, together with



GRAVE OF THE SON OF AN INDIAN CHIEF

the fact that there was a dispute between the Coast and Interior Indians regarding a certain hunting-ground, is said to have led to the war that immediately ensued.

The Indians on the Yukon River live in small tribes at different points—usually at the confluence of some tributary—and each tribe remains separate and distinct from its neighbours. Every tribe has a certain district over which the bucks hunt, and certain places

along the river where they fish for salmon during the summer. In establishing the boundaries of the different hunting-grounds disputes have arisen that have led to innumerable wars, and one of the most notable took place about twenty years ago between the tribes on the Pelly River and the tribes near the headwaters of the McKenzie. The war lasted several years, and during that time the bucks of one tribe never lost an opportunity of slaying the members of the rival tribe whom they found hunting on the disputed territory. Finally, however, the matter was settled by an understanding whereby each tribe agreed not to hunt on the disputed section, and since that time white hunters who have visited the place say that it is the best hunting-ground for moose and caribou in the North-West. The territory covers a large area of ground.

Although there is practically no intercourse between the different tribes along the Yukon River, their habits and customs, their dress, and modes of travel vary but little one from the other. They dress in furs during the winter, using the skins of moose and caribou that were originally killed for their meat. In summer they wear coarse, gaudily coloured fabrics obtained by trading furs at the nearest post or settlement. The tribes in the vicinity of Dawson and other towns have built substantial log cabins in imitation of the cabin of the white man, but the majority live in skin tepees, or tents, one side of which is usually open so that a fire may be kept burning.

In stature the Indians are smaller than the average

white man, but they are exceptionally strong and have wonderful powers of endurance. Morally, they are as a rule honest, and the experience of nearly every traveller who has entered the Yukon country has been that he was less liable to suffer from theft while among the Indians than he was with his native race. During the early rush to Klondike, in the summer of 1897, innumerable thefts occurred along the mountain trails, and in every case the perpetrators were found to be white men, not Indians. The dishonest white has even gone so far as to steal from the Indians, and an illustration of this was seen when the writer was ascending the Yukon on a small steamer in September 1898. The vessel tied up one night in Thirty-Mile River, near the mouth of the Hootalinqua, and a dozen Indians came aboard with skins and moccasins, which they were willing either to sell for coin or to exchange for tobacco, sugar, or flour. While the negotiations were going on, a beaver-skin that had been passed round among the passengers disappeared, and the Indians, failing to find it, withdrew in little bunches, evidently to concoct some plan for revenge. The passengers then instituted a search for the missing hide, but were unable to find it, so, rather than have further trouble, they contributed an amount equal to the value of the skin. On the following morning the skin was found concealed among some machinery in the engine-room, but no one knew who had stolen it.

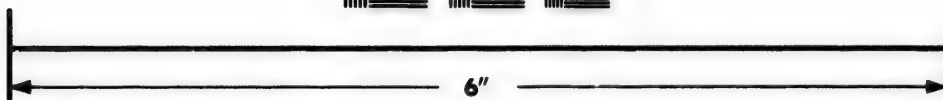
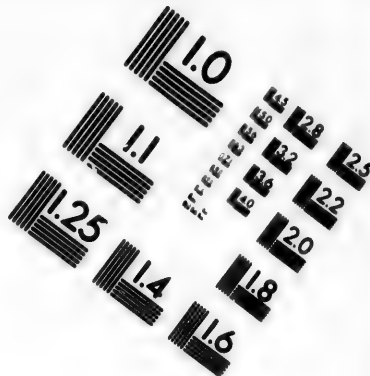
The leader of this tribe was a curiously got-up character, who imitated as best he could the dress of

the civilised whites. His clothing, which he had probably got in trade from travellers, might have been made by a London tailor, but there certainly had been inaccuracies in the measurements. The coat and vest would have fitted a very large man, while the buck's younger brother would have looked very well in the trousers. The vest was a fancy double-breasted affair in rather loud colours, and his dilapidated silk hat might have served its original purpose in Piccadilly, London, or Fifth Avenue, New York. He wore a tan shoe on one foot and the remnant of a black patent



INDIANS IN EUROPEAN DRESS

leather, of a different size and style, on the other. The vanity of this savage was typical of the Indian, and to satisfy it he had foolishly given up his soft, warm furs, which had taken days of continued endurance to procure, for the cast-off garments of the civilised whites. The advantage taken by the white in trading with the Indian is astonishing almost beyond belief, and, as an instance, a case might be cited where a traveller, who had found a small red cap that had been discarded by a member of the North-West Mounted Police, exchanged it with an



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Indian at the mouth of the Big Salmon for a bear-skin and a grey fox-skin, both of which were properly cured and ready to be made into garments. The writer also got some information concerning this condition of things from a traveller who had once been in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company, on the north-east coast. This man said that for a fine bear-skin or a few grey fox-skins the company generally paid three pounds of sugar or an ounce of tobacco. The company, however, increased this allowance for beaver and other skins of greater value.

The Indians of the interior live almost entirely on fresh and dried moose and caribou meat, and fresh and dried salmon, although since the appearance of the gold-miner in the North they have learned to use flour, sugar, rice, and beans. The Indians crave for sugar, candy, and tobacco more than anything else, and they are always willing to exchange furs and moccasins for either. The women as well as the men smoke tobacco, and if a traveller wants a photograph of an Indian camp he will find the thing quite impossible until he passes his tobacco-pouch among the men and gives the young squaws and children a supply of candy. Indians are naturally averse to the camera, and when they see one staring them in the face they vanish as if by magic, and hastily drop the skin doors of their tents. The outlay in tobacco and candy used by the writer in securing the pictures of Indian camps in this volume would supply a Hudson Bay trader with enough of the customary purchasing medium to last him a season. Particular difficulty was

experienced with the old buck who is seen standing by his tent, and the agonised expression of his face will, I think, prove the truth of this assertion. In trading with coin one can accomplish as much with a silver crown (or a dollar) as with a pound (or a five-dollar gold-piece), because the Indians prefer silver on account of its rarity.

Their intense liking for sugar, which is also a common characteristic of the white in the Far North, may be illustrated by the experience of Mr. Adney, of *Harper's Weekly*, who spent eight weeks hunting moose with the Klondike Indians during the winter of 1898. While in camp Mr. Adney was taken sick, but not so seriously that it was necessary for him to notify his friends in Dawson. It was the custom of the Indians to sled the meat to Dawson as rapidly as the game was killed, and one day an Indian "buck," who had just disposed of his sled-load of moose, appeared at the cabin of Mr. Adney's friends in Dawson and said that Mr. Adney was sick, and quite likely to die. The friends were considerably alarmed, but the Indian quieted their fears by saying that he thought a half-barrel of sugar would make him well again. The sugar was sent to the camp, and two days later another Indian came to Dawson saying that Mr. Adney was still "heap sick," and "wanted more shoog" (sugar). This continued for a week, when the supply of sugar, which had originally amounted to two hundred pounds, was exhausted. It was afterwards learned from Mr. Adney that the Indians had supplied him with moose meat while he was ill, and had taken the sugar in payment.

The camp life of the bucks is usually one of ease and luxury, which is varied only by seasons of exceptional hardship and endurance while on the track of game. But when the game has been killed, and the bucks and squaws have carried or sledded it to the camp, the buck reclines on a heap of furs in the tepee, smokes



YUKON INDIAN CAMP

tobacco, and gracefully permits the squaws to gather wood for the fire, prepare the meals, make clothing out of the furs, and properly care for the game that was killed on the last hunting trip. During the summer the Indians migrate from one place to another, pitching their tents where the salmon run is best, and where there is an abundance of dry fire-wood.

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together the camp equipment and load it into the birch-bark canoes, and when all is in readiness for the start the bucks and squaws take their different places in the boat, and the journey is begun. The buck usually sits in the stern of the canoe and paddles and steers at the same time, while the squaws paddle on either side. The Indians are quite expert in the management of these canoes, and very frequently the squaws are as adept in the art as the bucks. When a suitable place is reached for the summer's camp the squaws erect the skin tents and proceed to make things comfortable, while the bucks make preparations for setting the fish-traps.

The Northern Indians were once more numerous than they are at the present time, but an epidemic of small-pox, which they were totally unable to check, carried them off in great numbers. Through this and other causes the old miners and traders, who have been intimately acquainted with the different Yukon tribes for more than twelve or fifteen years, believe that they are slowly becoming extinct. The individual tribes vary greatly in number, some of the upper river bands having not more than fifty members, while others of the Lower Yukon, in Alaskan territory, are very much larger.

The old Russian missions on the Lower Yukon River have done a great deal towards educating the Indians, and the Church of England, through Bishop Bompas, and the Roman Catholics, through Father Judge, and others, have accomplished nearly as much with the tribes above Circle City. The pilots on the river

steamers have, in years past, been Indians from the lower river, and these men, many of whom were educated at the missions, frequently speak the English language as well as the whites.

At Forty-Mile Post a school has been established by the Catholics for the education of Indian girls, and they are taught the rudiments of the English language, and also the rudiments of cleanliness, the latter of which is said to be a subject difficult to master. The teaching of the missionaries has also had a wholesome effect upon the morals of the different tribes.

The Indians of the lower river live in "dug-outs" and small cabins built of drift-wood, which is annually brought down from the upper river by the ice in the spring floods. This wood is also gathered along the shores of the river, after the waters have subsided, for fuel for the following winter. In travelling with dogs the lower river tribes usually cover immense distances in a single day by using all the dogs they can secure, and by shoeing their sleds with walrus-ivory which has been scraped by the squaws into thin strips and put on in such a way that the joints are perfectly smooth. The great advantage of this form of runner over steel is due to the fact that when "glacier" water is encountered, as frequently happens even in the coldest weather, the ivory runners slide over the ice as smoothly afterwards as before, while the steel runner will usually "frost" and drag.

The bark canoes used by the Indians are almost invariably made by the squaws, who afterwards have to keep them in repair. At certain seasons of the year

the bark is stripped from the largest birch-trees found on the northern slopes and stretched over a light framework, which is also usually made of birch-wood. The pieces of bark are then made fast to the frame by stitching with willow or leather thongs, and the joints in the bark sides and bottom of the craft are pitched over so as to make them water-tight. The canoes are propelled through the water by paddles, although poles are frequently used. They vary greatly in size, and some are made so small that they can be occupied by but one person at a time, and so



INDIAN BIRCH-BARK CANOE

narrow that it requires great skill in keeping them balanced. The speed with which these small boats may be paddled through the water in a given time is remarkable, and the distance covered in a day's travel is often very great.

The Indians make moccasins, mittens, "water-boots," fur caps, and snow-shoes out of the hides of the game they kill, and the surplus, as in the case of meat and dried salmon, is sold or traded to the miners. The moccasins and mittens are made of moose and caribou hide, while the caps are usually made of fox or wolf. The moccasins are of a quality inferior to the "Canadian" moccasins, and last but a very short

time. The mittens are made with long gauntlets, lined with blanket and decorated with fur and needle-work. The snow-shoes vary somewhat in design with the different tribes, but always consist of a light wooden frame and a good quality of finely woven gut. The Indian snow-shoe is always longer and narrower than the Canadian design, and, owing to the fine, dry, flour-like condition of the snow, must present a much larger area to the surface in order to be of any service at all. The foot of the traveller is lashed to the snow-shoe by thongs in the manner shown in the illustration. "Skies," like those used in Norway, are never seen.

The experiences of Lieutenant Lowe, of the United States Army, who was sent by this Government during the summer of 1898 to explore Alaska from a point near the Copper River to Dawson, a distance of three hundred miles overland, illustrates a few of the tribal characteristics of the Northern Indians. The Lowe expedition traversed the Valdez glacier, ascended the Copper River, and crossed the big peninsula near the bases of Mount Sanborn and Mount Drumm. They encountered the first Indians when they reached the Tanana, and had no difficulty in exchanging flour and sugar for fresh fish and moose meat. The Indians were much interested in their visitors, and took great pride in showing them their own store and trading post. The chief approached the Lieutenant and said: "Indians have store all same white man," and then he took the party to a little log hut and proceeded to show them the stock-in-trade, which Lieutenant Lowe afterwards told the writer consisted of two cans of lard

and a lot of red calico. The pride taken by the Indians in this store was ludicrous in the extreme, and Lieutenant Lowe and his party concealed their mirth with difficulty. Every year the Indians of this camp receive a stock of flour, sugar, and tobacco from a neighbouring tribe, which in turn brings it from the post at Forty Mile, on the Yukon River. While the party was encamped, the men were assisted by the Indians in swimming their horses across the Tanana River, which was accomplished by lashing together two small canoes and guiding the horses as they swam behind the boat. Lieutenant Lowe tried to get information regarding the distance to the source of the Tanana, and the Indians replied that they had never been farther up stream than "ten sleeps," meaning ten days' travel, and there were still no signs of the river diminishing in volume. The Indians afterwards acted as guides to Lieutenant Lowe and his party, but not even additional offers of tobacco and sugar would induce them to go beyond the confines of their own territory. A day after the party left the Tanana in the direction of Forty-Mile Post they were overtaken by an Indian who had found a red bandana handkerchief in the camp deserted by Lowe's party, and had travelled all day to return it—an episode which might serve as a lasting lesson in honesty to some of the Indians' "civilised" brethren.

There are very few instances of white men having lost their lives by attacks from the Yukon Indians, but the one that occurred during the summer of 1898 was excessively cruel, and the prompt justice meted

out to the perpetrators of the crime has served as an effective lesson to the different tribes. Among the thousands of adventurers who wended their way down the head rivers and lakes of the Yukon were two men who had previously determined to spend several months along the different tributaries while *en route* to Dawson prospecting for gold. These men crossed Lake Le Barge, where a camp of the lowest type of Northern Indians is situated, and then turned into the McClintock, a small stream running into the eastern side of the lake. While they were ascending this stream in a small boat they were attacked by Indians in ambush, and one of the miners was instantly killed by a bullet that pierced his head. The other was seriously wounded by being shot through the chest, but he reached the shore, and, after great difficulty, escaped from his assailants and arrived, three days later, at an isolated station of the North-West Mounted Police. The police went immediately to the camp of the tribe on Lake Le Barge and arrested four Indian boys, all of whom were afterwards identified by the wounded miner as his assailants. The savages had committed the crime believing that they could get possession of the miners' outfits of provisions and still escape detection. They were taken to Dawson and confined in the barracks, and, several weeks later, after a trial lasting three days, were sentenced to be hanged.

An Indian became involved in a quarrel with a drunken miner at Circle City in 1894, and finally shot him in self-defence. There were no Courts in the

interior of Alaska before which the Indian could be tried, so he was taken to the coast by a United States Marshal. Subsequently he was acquitted, and allowed to return to his home in the interior, where he became an interesting object to both the Indians and the miners. During his sojourn in civilisation the Indian had seen railway trains, ocean steamers, lifts or elevators, the telephone, and numerous other objects of interest, but they had produced practically no impression on his savage brain. However, he had seen a pig, and he never lost an opportunity of telling his fellow tribesmen that out on the coast the bacon was black, and not brown as it was in the interior. This and other stories so inflamed another Indian with desire to go to the coast and see the black bacon running about the pens, that, without the slightest provocation, he shot and killed a miner who was at work washing out gold on a river bar, the Indian believing that he, too, would be sent on a journey to the sea-coast. But when the news of the murder reached the miners, they took possession of the steamer *Alice*, belonging to the Alaska Commercial Company, ascended the Tanana River to the scene of the crime, and hanged the Indian, who readily acknowledged the deed, to a tree.

It frequently happens that from different causes the hunting is poor during some winters, and the Indians are threatened with starvation. During the winter of 1897-98 the Indians living on the Porcupine River, a tributary of the Yukon, which heads towards the McKenzie River and flows into the Yukon at the point where the latter intercepts the Arctic Circle, were

forced to journey to Fort Yukon, a distance of probably two hundred miles, to get supplies. The trip was one of continued hardships and exposure, and, in their weakened condition, several of the older Indians perished from starvation and exhaustion on the trail. The entire tribe presented a pitiful appearance, and it was fortunate for them that they were able to get provisions at the post near the mouth of the Porcupine River. The barges of supplies at Fort Yukon furnished food enough for both the whites and the Indians, and the latter, after a few weeks' rest, returned to their camp near the head-waters of the Porcupine with sufficient flour to last through the winter. The sufferings of the Indians during the more severe winters before the advent of the white man were terrible, and starvation has frequently been their lot.

When provisions were scarce in Dawson, moosemeat sold for four shillings (or one dollar) a pound, and the Indians in the immediate vicinity earned a good deal of money by hunting game, and also by freighting supplies to the mines. Outside of these two occupations, however, Indians seldom seek employment, and only in a very few instances are they interested in mining claims. They care little for money so long as a half-sack of flour and a few ounces of tobacco can be found in their tents. The little Indian boys, however, were about Dawson during the winter and spring earning from a pound (or five dollars) to two pounds (ten dollars) a day, doing various kinds of labour. Up to the time Klondike was struck these boys had never known of the delights

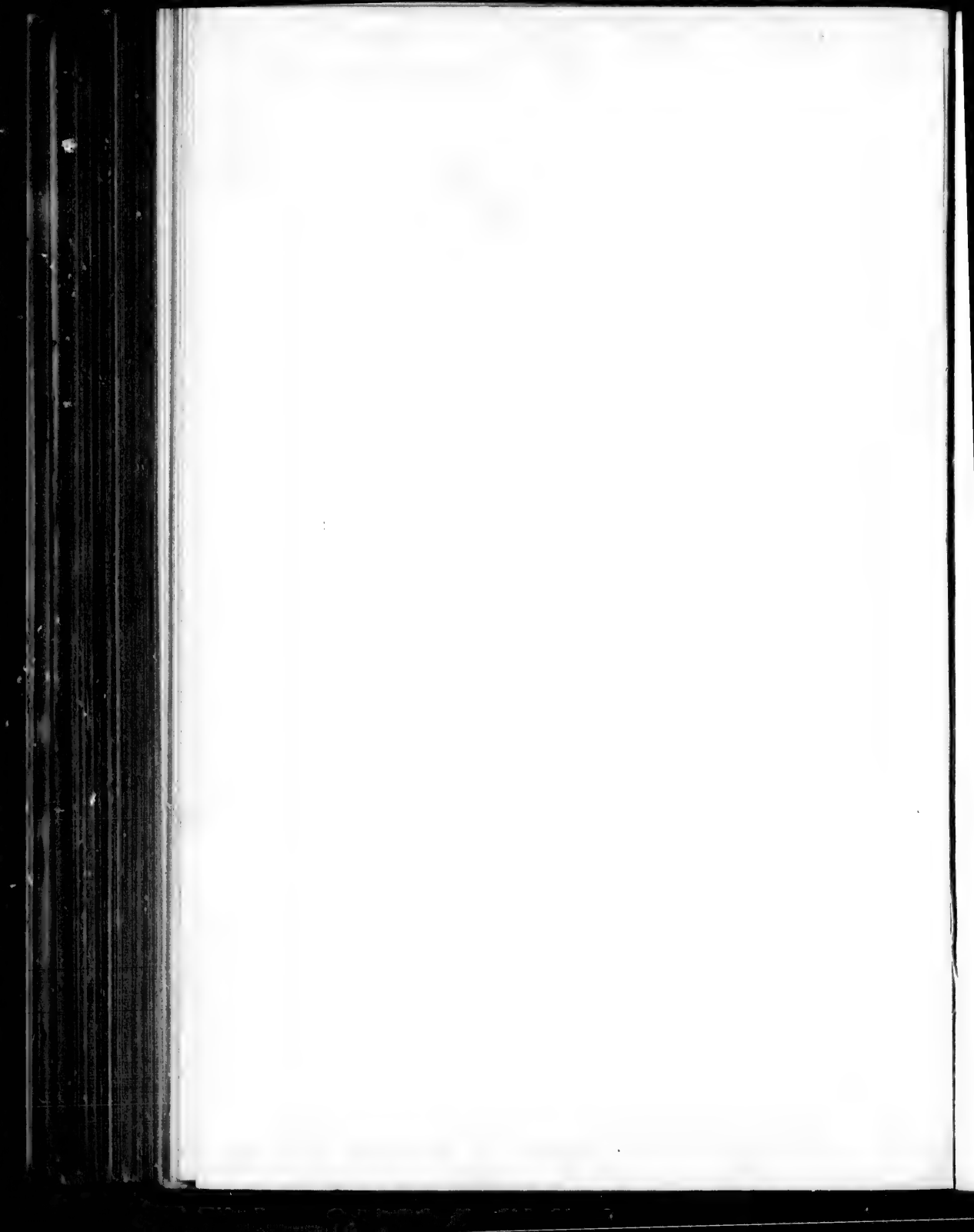
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THE COLUMBIAN LEAVING DAWSON



experienced by the white boys in eating dried-apple pie, and, when a bakery was established in Dawson, these little half-savages would wend their way to the baker's cabin and spend half their earnings on pie. I was considerably amused at the business instinct, as well as the "pie capacity"—pardon the expression—of a young Indian who drove to a bakery one day with a team of half-starved Siwash pups and mongrels. He and a boy of ten years entered the cabin and asked the baker to "weigh-out" a shilling's (or twenty-five cents') worth of gold-dust from a total amount of one pound twelve shillings (or eight dollars), which they had just earned hauling wood with the dogs. When the dust was weighed the elder Indian, who was perhaps fourteen years old, gave it to the younger boy with an air implying an acute attack of generosity. Then these two young savages ate pie with a *vim* corresponding to the individual wealth of each. Pies at that time were sold for four shillings (or one dollar) each, so the raptures enjoyed by the younger were soon brought to a sudden and cruel end, while the elder continued in his mad dissipation, with unalloyed joy, until four pies had vanished from the counter. During all this time the younger boy looked on with an expression which told conclusively of a dream that existed somewhere beneath his unkempt hair that wealth might some day come to him as it had to his older brother.

Wherever the Indians have come continually in contact with the miners, their business and trading instincts have become sharpened, so that now, when

they once set a price on moose-meat or a pair of moccasins, they will seldom accept a less sum than the amount originally asked. This characteristic was well illustrated during the spring of 1898, when the Indians, rather than accept less than four shillings (or one dollar) a pound for fresh meat, would sled it from Dawson back to the Indian village, a distance of about two miles. And, once this business principle had become well rooted, it was difficult for them to understand that when the prices for both clothing and provisions were greatly reduced in all the general stores of the camp they could not get the old prices for their moccasins and mittens.

It has always been the custom of the Alaska Commercial Company to make annual presents to the Indians of the tribes near the trading-posts, and especially to the "bucks" who act as river pilots when navigation is open, and it so happened that, during the shortage of provisions in Dawson, "Present Day" among the Indians had had to be overlooked. The Indians, however, were unwilling that this state of affairs should exist, so the Chief of the Klondikes made a personal call upon Captain Hansen, of the company, and asked when it would suit him best to give his Indians presents. If the Captain had had any real choice in the matter he would probably have appointed a day several years hence, but the circumstances were such that he had to do the best he could with the small stock of available presents on hand. Accordingly, a time was fixed, and, when the happy day arrived, every Indian in the camp, from the oldest buck, who ordi-

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narily never left his tent from one "Present Day" to another, to the youngest papoose who had yet to be introduced to the pleasures of pie-eating, presented him or her self at the store of the Alaska Commercial Company to receive their presents. Flour was scarce, and so was bacon, but the Captain managed to give a few pounds of each, together with a little tea—all of which was taken from his private *cache*—to the Indians, and then made up the deficiency in provisions by giving toys to the children and a little tobacco to the bucks and squaws.



INDIAN GIRLS

The street in front of the store at the time when the presents were being distributed was alive with Siwash curs and filled with birch-bark toboggans and sleds. The dogs were continually fighting, and the scene that occurred beggars description.

In travelling over the snow, where a trail has not previously been made, the Indians use a light, birch-bark toboggan that rests on the snow and offers very little resistance when drawn over the surface. They usually precede the dogs and break a trail, so that

the animals can follow easily, and in this way they are able to travel a distance of from fifteen to twenty miles a day, carrying with them sufficient camp equipment on the toboggan to pass the nights spent on the trail in comparative comfort.

Snow-shoeing is not practised as generally in the Klondike country as one would suppose, because the snow is rarely moist enough to bear the weight of a man, even when the larger snow-shoes are worn. During March and April, however, the noon sun has a melting effect on the surface of the snow, and when the sun disappears a crust is formed. This crust remains firm until the sun melts it again at noon on the succeeding day, but, even during that short period, snow-shoeing is practically impossible because of the fine, dry condition of the snow in the winter months. Snow-shoes are used mainly to break down the surface snow and make a trail over which dogs may follow with the sled.

Since the advent of the missionaries of the Church, the Indians have tried to forget the quaint legends that have been handed down from one generation to the other, and it is seldom that an educated buck will even admit that he has ever heard of such a thing as a legend. The missionaries teach them to lay aside these legends and to forget the numerous superstitions they formerly believed, and only once did I hear a legend that came direct from an Indian. This particular buck, who told the Indian story of the Northern Lights, did it only after repeated urgings, and upon the promise that the listener would never tell the

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missionaries. The buck who related the legend had spent nearly all his life at Forty-Mile Post, where he died in the winter of 1897-98. The legend in effect was something like this :

Many hundred years ago there lived in the North a great giant who was also a great hunter. This giant pursued the game at all seasons of the year, and caught and killed wild animals with no other weapon than the strength of his arm. At one time, during the long days of summer when the sun scarcely disappeared below the tops of the hills, the giant returned from a long chase and lay down on a hill-side to rest. But the light from the sun was eternal, and the giant rolled and tossed, unable to sleep. Finally, in his despair, he arose and, grasping the day, tore it into little bits and cast it in every direction. Then the seasons changed and the winter came. The sun remained hidden behind the southern hills, and there was nothing but darkness. The giant longed for the light, but the sun had disappeared, and he was tantalised by the little pieces of the broken day that came back in the night time ; and these little pieces of the broken day are called by the white man " Northern Lights."



INDIANS RETURNING FROM FISHING

CHAPTER X

Hunting and Fishing—Difficulties in Following Game—The Approach of the Miners on Territory Inhabited by Big Game—Importance of Fresh Meat when other Supplies are Inadequate—Indian Method of Hunting Moose—Hunting Big Game in Summer—The Caribou—The Bear—Wolves, Wolverines, Beavers, Foxes, Rabbits, &c.—Fish: Salmon, Pickerel, Trout—Ducks and Geese—Ptarmigan, Grouse, and Hudson Bay Chickens—Wild Berries.

THE rough mountain slopes and the heavily timbered valleys of the North-West abound in big game of the species usually sought after by the more experienced hunters and the hardy men who search for adventure among the wilds of unsettled districts. The game in the country immediately surrounding the gold-fields of the Klondike tributaries embraces nearly all the larger animals of the North American Continent, and the ones most highly prized by professional hunters. The

mountain sheep, the deer and the elk, however, are missing, although sheep inhabit the Rocky Mountains nearer the sea-coast. The game found near the mines comprises, usually, the moose, the caribou and the bear, and those who prefer the chase to the miner's pick and shovel, and can stand the hardships of outdoor life in the midst of an Arctic winter, or the tortures of travelling over swamps and moss and the torments of ravenous mosquitos in summer, find profitable employment, together with the keenest of sport, in supplying the Dawson markets with game.

To be a successful hunter of moose or caribou requires a constitution that can undergo considerable fatigue. The hunters usually travel a distance varying from twenty to a hundred miles to reach good hunting-grounds where the animals are not in a habitual state of fear, caused by the interruptions of the miners or the noise and confusion of passing dog-teams. In early days, when the miners took things more leisurely than they do in these days of the Klondike, it was customary for each man to go into the hills and mountains in the autumn, and kill enough game to last through the winter. But this has all been changed, and each man now exerts himself simply in digging gold, seldom finding time to follow the uncertain occupation of hunting through the forests for his winter's supply of meat. It is considerably more convenient, and not so much of a doubtful gamble in time for him to buy the supply direct from the Indians.

So much have the miners been forced to rely upon wild game for their sustenance that it was not an

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unusual occurrence for a man to begin the winter with nothing in his cabin but a single sack of flour. The conditions were such that it was often impossible to obtain an additional supply of the cereal until the following spring, and during the long dark months of winter the miner would be forced to live almost entirely on a meat diet. This state of affairs existed because, for some reason, the little trading steamers had failed that season in getting in a supply of flour and other provisions necessary to support the camp, and, when the icy locks of winter once held the Yukon in check, there were no other opportunities of bringing them in. This condition has fortunately disappeared, and now the men in the Yukon mining camps look upon moose meat as a luxury, and rely almost entirely upon the provisions purchased at the store to carry them through the winter.

The advance of the miner into the very stamping-ground of wild game was illustrated in a forcible manner in Dawson during the winter, when men were stampeding in every direction to stake claims upon creeks whose very existence had been practically unknown a week earlier. When the stampedeers arrived at the mouth of these creeks, and particularly the tributaries of Dominion and Sulphur, they found no track of man or dog that they could follow, so they wended their way towards the head of the stream, following the freshly made tracks of the moose and caribou, which had probably preceded them along the creek by not more than a few minutes. Frequently the stampedeers would come upon circular patches of

ground that had been beaten perfectly level by the stamping of hundreds of hoofs, and where the bark would be torn from the saplings and smaller trees by the animals' antlers. And during these stampedes miners often came face to face in the forest with a moose, or perhaps frightened a band of caribou, which took to the ridge and probably ran for a mile in full view of the hunters for gold.

Moose and caribou have been plentiful in the vicinity of the mines, but the rapid growth in population has driven them back, so that the hunters have to go greater distances each year in quest of the winter's meat. The tracks of these animals can frequently be seen, however, mingled with the tracks of men and dogs, even on the main trails leading to the mines.

Hunting these animals during the severity of winter entails great hardship and exposure as well as the attendant danger of freezing, which, of course, is absent during the summer hunting. In winter the moose usually keep to the hill-sides, and their keen sense of smell enables them to tell of the approach of the hunter long before he is aware that there are moose in the vicinity. And when they once begin to move they frequently keep travelling for several days and nights without stopping. The hunters, therefore, go in pairs, and while one remains in the creek bottom, where the moose sometimes seek a hiding-place, the other moves along the summit or sides of the hills. In this way they frequently get shots that otherwise would have been impossible, and, when they take the

extra precaution of travelling against the wind, their chances of seeing game are again increased.

It sometimes happens that a badly directed shot will wound a bull-moose, and this usually so infuriates the animal that he charges against his assailants with antlers lowered; and then he is a very undesirable foe. I have frequently heard old miners say that they would rather face a bear than a wounded moose, although I never heard of a death resulting from a fight with a moose, while I have often been told of fatal encounters with bears.

The Indians hunt moose in a different manner from that of the white hunter, who usually travels through the forests, taking advantage of whatever shots he runs across, and seldom tracks the game if it succeeds in making its escape. The Indian considers that every moose he meets is his, and if the first shot is unsuccessful, or if he fails to get a first shot, he takes the trail and follows day and night until he overtakes the exhausted animal and kills it. The Indian hunter always carries with him a blanket and some dried salmon, and these, together with snow-shoes and rifle, fit him for continued travel over the snow and trail, upon which he may be forced to journey for three or four days without much rest. The Indians make their way across the snow, especially when it is deep, with considerably less exertion than the moose, and to this fact is due their ultimate success. When the animal is killed, the Indian dresses the carcase and *caches* the meat high up in a tree, away from the wolves, and then returns to camp to get the assistance

of the other bucks and squaws in getting it out to the trail leading to Dawson. It sometimes happens that the moose has led the hunter so long a chase into the interior that the great distance intervening between the regularly beaten trails renders it impossible for the Indians to get the meat to market, and it has to be abandoned for the wolves and other wild animals to devour.

The annual hunting trip of the Klondike Indians is usually taken between January 1 and April 1 of each year. At that time a temporary camp is established at a point about twenty-five miles up the Klondike River from Dawson; and, when the time arrives to break camp at the permanent village below Dawson, every buck and squaw and child in the camp that can either draw a snow-toboggan or drive a Siwash cur takes his or her place in line, and the procession starts. The sleds are loaded with skin tents, kettles, rifles, and other camp equipment, and the home camp is deserted by every one save those who are decrepit with age and too weak to travel.

The bucks lead the way, and the one who travels ahead strikes off at his most rapid gait, which he keeps up as long as possible. When he becomes partially exhausted by setting the pace over an unbroken trail, he steps to one side to allow the next in line to take the lead, and then falls in behind the last buck, but ahead of the first squaws, all of whom follow with the children, each one drawing all the weight they can on the frail snow-toboggans. The march is usually kept up until shortly after noon, when an hour's rest is

taken by the squaws, while the bucks take their rifles and hunt on the neighbouring hills. During this intermission the Indians seldom take lunch, and not until the afternoon's hard march is over and a temporary camp is pitched for the night is the meal of the day prepared.

When the tribe reaches its final camping-ground, the men immediately begin to hunt for moose, and when they once see game they follow continually, as has already been described, until the animal is overtaken and slain. The buck who is fortunate enough to have killed the moose takes the dogs and sleds and hauls the meat to Dawson, where it is sold to the miners. Afterwards he returns to the camp, and after a short rest begins the search anew.

During all this time the winter temperature has perhaps been at the minimum, and it is not an uncommon thing for an Indian to spend a night in the woods when the temperature is forty or fifty degrees below zero, Fahrenheit. In cases of this sort he builds a great fire of dry and green wood, rolls up in his blanket, and goes to sleep with his feet towards the fire. If he gets so cold in the night that he awakens he piles more wood on the fire and goes to sleep again—"toasted on one side and frozen stiff on the other," to use a local expression, which, of course, is something of an exaggeration.

The dressed hide of the moose is thick and admirably adapted for rough wear, either for the different uses of the miner or for the Indians. The hair is coarse and long and not suitable for trimming. The

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miners sometimes use a moose hide as a carpet for the floors of their cabins, and, in fact, one never sees any other carpet in the cabins of the gold district.

In the summer-time the moose are found in the bottom-lands and near the running streams, where they are pursued and killed with greater ease and less hardship than during the winter season. Still-hunting is sometimes resorted to, because the swamp lands in the creek-bottoms make it difficult for the hunter to move about without considerable fatigue and without making too much noise to be successful in stalking game. Moose are frequently seen swimming across the streams and rivers in the unsettled districts during summer, but travellers in journeying down the Yukon seldom meet with such a golden opportunity to secure a supply of fresh meat. During the early rush to the Klondike a few of the most adventurous spirits entered the Yukon country by way of Teslin Lake and the Hootalinqua River, and the men who were successful in reaching Dawson by that route had no difficulty in killing all the moose they could safely load in their boats by shooting the animals as they swam across the stream ahead of their crafts. One party of three men brought fourteen hundred pounds of dressed moose-meat to Dawson and sold it for four hundred sovereigns (or two thousand dollars). Moose-meat is unusually tender, and is considered a luxury in comparison to beef.

Caribou, or American reindeer, are much smaller than moose, and resemble the deer in build and habits, although they are larger in size and more hardy, having

a different quality and colour of hide. The antlers are large and comparatively thick, and stand quite erect from the head. The caribou migrate in great bands during certain seasons of the year, and, when these long journeys are over, they separate either in small bands or singly, and browse or graze over a great area. The hide is not considered as good for moccasins as moose, but there is seemingly very little choice in the qualities of the two meats. Caribou robes are sometimes used by travellers, but wolf is usually preferred.

During the late autumn and early winter, when the caribou are moving south, hunting is at its best, although at the seasons when they are working slowly northward there is usually little difficulty in finding them on the hill-sides and near the heads of the small streams. When caribou are attacked they become bewildered by the report of the rifle, and frequently they run directly towards the hunter, who has the advantage of a second or, perhaps, a third shot. When the miners were hunting caribou in the autumn of 1897, an immense band containing several thousand animals was encountered by a lone hunter about thirty miles from Dawson up the Klondike River. This hunter, without "moving from his tracks," killed fifty-two caribou, and the last one was despatched with the butt of his rifle, because his supply of cartridges had been exhausted. The band moved slowly on, and had there been more ammunition for the rifle, a greater number could easily have been killed. The meat was then selling at from four to six shillings (or a dollar to a dollar and a half) a pound, and this hunter, who had to

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give half the meat to the Indians for sledding it to Dawson, and then lost some through attacks by wolves, made a small fortune out of his fifteen minutes' work with the rifle.

The old miners who used to live in Circle City are fond of telling of a band of caribou that once stampeded through the streets of their little log-cabin town. The band came wandering along the north side of the Yukon River in search of a suitable place to cross, and waited until one of the number should take the initial plunge. After considerable hesitation one of the caribou took to the water at a point opposite and a little above the site of Circle City, and the rest of the band immediately followed. The current carried them down stream, so that they reached the opposite bank of the river right in front of the cabins of Circle City. Then they rushed through the streets of the town, heading for the high hills, but the miners succeeded in killing enough to furnish a winter's provision in meat before they escaped. There are certain places on the upper river where the caribou always cross the stream while going north in the spring and south in the autumn, and one of these localities is known to the miners as Caribou Crossing.

The bears of Alaska and the North-West Territories are noted for their ferociousness, and deaths have frequently resulted from encounters with them of both Indians and whites. There are said to be from seven to ten distinct species, and some are so fierce that they will attack a traveller without the least provocation. The "silver tip" corresponds to the grizzly

of the lower Rocky Mountains, and, especially in the spring of the year, when the bears have left their winter dens in a half-starved condition, they are exceptionally savage. The bears of all species, when they are raising cubs, are ferocious, but ordinarily the average black or brown bear will run away from a hunter and make no show of fight unless he is wounded. The bears live on wild berries, fish, and small game in the summer season, and then hibernate, or "den up," in winter. The wild berries grow on the hill-sides and in the creek bottoms, and a traveller is as apt to encounter a bear in one place as another. They catch fish by remaining motionless on a rock beside a stream in which salmon are running, and when they see a fish they reach for it with their paws. They are often successful, and, with both fish and berries to live on, the bears usually become very fat by the fall of the year. When they "den up," they hunt out some secluded cave in the rocks or a hole in the ground, and, after making a bed of dry moss, pull in a great heap of it after them, so that the entrance may be entirely closed, and they can keep reasonably warm during their long sleep.

Several deaths resulted from encounters with bears during the summer of 1898, and fatalities of this sort will probably occur every succeeding summer, because the bears are so numerous that great difficulty will be experienced in exterminating them. The writer saw a man in August of that year who had been terribly lacerated by a bear's claws on Gold Bottom Creek: his friends were carrying him on a litter to the

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hospital in Dawson. A few days later I heard of the mysterious disappearance of a miner who was supposed to have been killed by a bear. This man had been living alone in a cabin on Quartz Creek, and one day three friends came from Dawson, visited the cabin, and found it deserted. The door was open, a fire was burning in the stove, and there was every indication that the occupant of the cabin had gone out for a few moments and would soon return. After waiting in vain for an hour, a search was made for the missing man, but he was never found, the supposition being that he had seen a bear from the door of his cabin and had gone to kill it, but that he had lost his life in the encounter. The rifle was missing from its accustomed rack, and this, of course, strengthened the belief that the man had been killed while pursuing game.

I have heard of several instances of prospectors returning to their tents for the noon meal, to find a bear in possession of the camp, and a prospector, who once disputed the right of a bear to molest his bacon and flour, lost his life in the fight that ensued. The bear was injured by the first shot, and before the man could take a second chance the infuriated animal was upon him. A story is told in the mines of a Russian Finn who returned to his cabin one day and found a bear and three cubs making themselves very comfortable about the premises. Being unused to bears, and knowing nothing of their fierceness, the Russian tried to drive them away with a stick, as one would drive away a calf. The old bear turned instantly upon her assailant, who escaped by first

climbing on his cabin and then into a neighbouring tree. Two or three hours later the bear went away, and the man came down from the tree, only to find that everything he had had to eat in the cabin had vanished.

Besides the moose, the caribou, and the bear, there are other species of game in the North that are seldom met with by the miner. The Indians, however, who have practically no other occupation than the pursuit of game, are familiar with them, and they rely on their traps to furnish them with this better quality of fur instead of on the game killed by the rifle for meat. These animals embrace wolves, wolverines, beavers, foxes, rabbits, &c. Robes are usually made from the skins of these smaller animals, as are the fur trimmings for caps, mittens, and fancy moccasins. Rabbits are found scattered pretty generally over the North, but although I have frequently observed their tracks on the snow I have never seen the Northern rabbit. The foot of this animal is said to be somewhat larger than that of the rabbits in warmer climates, a characteristic that enables them to run along on the surface of the snow without cutting through, and the fact that their coats turn perfectly white in winter makes it difficult for the hunter to see them. They are seldom caught, even by the Indians, and then only by the use of traps.

The fish of the rivers and lakes comprise a great many varieties, but the kinds more frequently caught are salmon, lake and brook trout, grayling, pike, pickerel, and a small white fish. Salmon are taken

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in great numbers by the Indians, who build willow fish-traps in the small streams where the fish are running; and when they are caught the squaws clean and hang them on a framework so that they will dry by the heat of the sun. Sometimes the salmon flesh is so thick that it is cut in many pieces before being exposed to the drying action of the sun and air. It is not an uncommon sight to see racks containing hundreds of salmon going through the process of drying on the bars of the different rivers and streams, and always in the vicinity of the Indian camp. The salmon, of course, are all from salt water, and they sometimes appear at Dawson, a distance of eighteen hundred miles from the mouth of the Yukon River, as early as June. The ice on the river usually breaks during the first week of May at Dawson, but it blocks up at the mouth and completely closes it for at least a month later. The salmon make their way beneath the ice-jam as early as possible, and begin the long and wearisome journey to the headwaters. The fish that arrive first are always strong and in good condition, but the quality becomes poorer as the later ones arrive in July and August. It is said that while on these journeys the salmon seldom feed, and this explains the weakened condition of those last to arrive. The size of the fish varies greatly, but it is not an uncommon thing to see in the meat market at Dawson salmon that will measure over five feet in length, and of a corresponding thickness. The white fishermen use nets, and sometimes a day's catch is sufficiently large to secure them considerable returns.

In journeying Dawson-ward over the big mountain lakes, travellers usually succeed in catching fine specimens of lake trout several feet in length, and grayling in the brooks and smaller streams. Lieutenant Lowe, in his journey from the Valdez Glacier to Dawson, caught a great many pickerel with a troll and silk trout line in the Tanana River, and during the early spring in Dawson men spent several weeks catching a small white fish through holes broken in the ice. The Indians take small fish of different varieties in the Yukon during the summer and autumn from very small birch canoes. I do not know what species of fish this is, but the Indians use a stick about two feet long for a pole, and about six feet of line, the fishermen drawing the hook and bait continually up and down in the water by the side of the canoe. In size and shape the fish resemble the smelt.

When the ducks and geese come north in the summer, the mountain lakes and streams fairly teem with them, and the travellers on the lakes can usually shoot more than they can eat as they drift along in their boats. Fowls are particularly thick on the small lakes up the Stewart River, and frequently they are seen on the Yukon and Klondike Rivers, although in greatly diminished numbers. Both ducks and geese nest in the marsh lands near the upper lakes, and near the headwaters of such streams as the Stewart, Klondike, and Tanana.

Ptarmigan are found on the summit of the mountains all through the long winter, but their white winter coats make them difficult to see. These birds are

excellent eating, but it is seldom that the miners take time to scour the summits searching for them. They remain near the unprotected mountain tops, because the winds usually keep the ground bare of snow, and expose the berries upon which they live; and they grow so fat and large that they fly with difficulty. The ptarmigan is as tame as the grouse or Hudson Bay chicken, and one can often approach to within a hundred feet of a covey. They usually keep together in bands, and sometimes several hundreds may be seen feeding together on the cold, wind-swept summits.

Grouse and Hudson Bay chickens are seen on the hill-sides and summits, generally during the summer-time, and they can be shot with very little difficulty. When Lieutenant Lowe was crossing the Tanana country his men always kept the table, or rather the "tin-plate," supplied with grouse and chickens which they shot with considerable ease with small revolvers.

The wild berries that grow almost everywhere in great profusion furnish the food for most of the feathered game, and make it possible for them to be always in good condition for eating.



BONANZA CREEK DURING THE SPRING FRESHETS

CHAPTER XI

Notes—Geographical Position of Dawson—Scenes of Geological Interest along the Yukon—Discovery of the Remains of Ancient Animals of Enormous Size—Degrees of Heat and Cold in the Klondike—Methods of Determining the Degree of Cold—The Varying Length of the Days—The Northern Lights—Occurrence of Coal—Copper—Silver—Difficulty in finding Protected Winter Berths for Steamers along the Yukon River—Action of the Waters of the Yukon on the Banks—Effects of Frost—Absence of Reptiles—Possibility of Growing Vegetables—A Theory—Life of the Glaciers on the Coast.

THE geographical position of Dawson has been determined as : Longitude, $139^{\circ} 30'$ west; Latitude, $64^{\circ} 30'$ north. From this it will be seen that the gold-fields lie considerably west of the meridian of San Francisco, but fifteen degrees east of Honolulu. The latitude

corresponds with that of Northern Norway and Iceland.

From a geological point of view, the Yukon and the mountains and valleys of the gold region present a series of interesting subjects. After passing through the sharp-walled canyon near Sheep Camp, the traveller climbs to the rocky summit of Chilcoot Pass, where an excellent view is had of mountain scenery in all its grandeur. On a clear day he can see on one side the deep blue water of Lynn Canal, an arm of the Pacific Ocean. On the other he catches a glimpse of Crater Lake, whose basin is hollowed from solid rock, and which may be considered as one of the highest sources of the mighty Yukon. He realises then that the rain falling on one side of the Chilcoot summit is borne away to the Pacific in a few hours by the turbulent Dyea river, while that which falls on the other follows the course of mountain torrents into the chain of lakes, and eventually, perhaps after months of imprisonment in these lakes, begins its journey of more than two thousand miles through the tortuous channels of the Yukon, past the flags of two nations, eventually to find a resting-place in the Behring Sea, not a great way north of the mouth of the little Dyea river.

In drifting with the current down the Yukon the traveller will presently notice a peculiar whitish streak, or layer, beneath the surface soil. This layer, which has been pronounced to be volcanic ash by the geologists in the service of the Canadian Government, is discernible for miles, and can be seen as readily on one bank as on the other. Its depth varies from a



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fraction of an inch to five or six feet, and it usually occurs about two feet beneath the sod. This volcanic ash has been distributed over an immense area, and it is believed that the peculiar whitish colour of White River, one hundred miles above Dawson, is due to the fact that somewhere in its course the stream traverses immense beds of ash.

Continuing the journey down the river, great benches of practically the same level, or height, will be seen on either side of the Yukon, showing that at one time that portion of the river was a mountain lake; but, through the disintegration of the gorge below, the lake has disappeared, and the river flows noiselessly, though swiftly, along the bed of the old lake. These levels may be traced through the entire mountain region traversed by the Yukon, and they disappear only when the river leaves the mountainous district and enters the flat valleys of Alaska.

During the work of developing the mines, animal remains have been found from time to time which prove beyond any doubt that the animals inhabiting the Yukon country in prehistoric ages were very different from those found there at the present day. Perhaps the most interesting of these remains are the great ivory tusks, evidently from an animal similar to the elephant, or mastodon, which have been unearthed on the creeks of both the Klondike and the Forty-Mile districts. These tusks vary in length from three to eight feet, and some of the largest are ten and twelve inches in thickness. The ivory has turned yellow from age, and the perpetual frost has cracked it to such

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A FROZEN RIVER IN MID-WINTER

an extent that it is valueless for commercial purposes. These tusks are always found close to the "bed-rock," and are buried beneath the frozen gravel at a depth varying from twelve to thirty feet. The miners usually hoist them to the surface, and take them to the cabins, where they are kept as relics. Several small tusks have been freighted on dog-sleds to Dawson, where they have been placed on exhibition.

Besides ivory tusks, great skulls, like those of gigantic cattle, and short, heavy bones, evidently from the fore-leg of an animal resembling the American panther, have frequently been found in the mines. Pieces of vertebræ have also been discovered measuring ten inches across. As in the case of the ivories, these remains are invariably found on or near "bed-rock," showing that these beasts lived and died at a time when the actual creek-beds were practically the "bed-rock" of the country, and that, during the ages that have elapsed since that time, the different creeks have gradually worn away portions of the hills and ravines, through erosion, and piled the *débris* to an average depth of twenty feet over the "bed-rock," at the same time covering up the animal remains which the miners are now unearthing.

The skulls of cattle found in this *débris* usually carry the heavy stubs of horns that have decayed and wasted away, and, from the measurements of these, it is estimated that, from tip to tip, these horns, including the breadth of skull, were not less than six or seven feet across. The ivory mastodon tusks are frequently worn on the under side of the curved portion, giving the

idea that during life the animal fed on moss or swamp grasses, and that, while it fed, these tusks slid along the surface of the ground before it.

The discovery of these remains has led to a theory, which has found favour in many quarters, that the Arctic regions were once tropical, and that, as the climate gradually changed to its present condition, the animals became extinct, their places being taken by the more hardy moose, the caribou, and the bear. However, there is really nothing in these discoveries to prove this theory to be correct, and, until fossils of tropical ferns and other plant-life are discovered, scientific men will not accept it. During my stay in the North, I had the pleasure of meeting Bishop Bompas, the Bishop of Selkirk, who has spent more than twenty years with the Indians of the Yukon region, endeavouring to instil into them the principles of Christianity. During a conversation we had regarding this theory, the Bishop said that he was being continually importuned by American and European scientific men to send some evidence, however small, to prove that the climatic condition of this region had once been different from that of the present time. The Bishop had made special efforts to produce such proof, but in this he had been unsuccessful.

The minimum degree of cold experienced during the winter of 1897-98 was generally accepted to be seventy-two degrees below zero, Fahrenheit. This temperature, however, was taken in a rather exposed location on the Klondike river, and is some degrees colder than the lowest experienced in Dawson. In

any event, these records are merely approximate, because there were no reliable instruments for determining the temperature except those privately owned by the Captain of the North-West Mounted Police at the Dawson barracks.

Mercurial thermometers become wholly useless when the cold is greater than forty degrees below zero, Fahrenheit, because the mercury freezes at that temperature, and spirit thermometers are equally unreliable at sixty-two or sixty-three degrees below zero. Our only method, then, of determining the temperature below this point was by hanging a bottle, containing a certain patent medicine known as "Pain-killer," outside the cabin, and if it froze solid we knew it was at least seventy-two degrees below zero. The ingredients of this remedy were of such a nature that they refused to solidify at a less degree of cold than seventy-two degrees below zero, and in this we had a useful instrument. How much colder it was than this we, of course, had no available means of knowing.

The days gradually became shorter after the middle of September, until December 21, when we experienced the minimum number of hours of daylight. It so happened that upon that day I made an excursion to Hunker Creek that I might investigate the truth of the stories circulated in Dawson regarding the mineral wealth of that particular creek. I left the "Examiner" cabin at seven o'clock in the morning, and picked my way through the timber to the Klondike River, by the light of a full moon. The sky was perfectly clear, and the light of the stars was partially eclipsed by that of

the intensely bright moon. Under such favourable conditions for travel, the trail on the Klondike River, in the direction of Hunker Creek, was easily followed. At half-past nine o'clock I saw the faintest tinge of red in the southern sky, the first warning of the break of day. Half an hour later this had assumed a brighter hue, but the striking peculiarity of it all lay in the fact that the dawn, like the twilight, which almost immediately follows, was so prolonged that the sky retained these individual colourings, without the slightest change, for half an hour at a time. At about half-past eleven o'clock, I saw a faint, dull-red ray that touched the summit of the highest hill until it glowed like the molten crater of a volcano. Presently, as if by way of reinforcement, the sun sent an additional ray, and the molten mountain top increased slightly in size. It was now high noon and the day was half over. The sun withdrew its colour rays, as silently and as slowly as it had sent them, and we had, in the twilight, a repetition of the long-drawn-out dawn. During the noon hour the sky assumed a peculiar greenish tinge, which I can liken only to the colour of a robin's egg, and which gradually gave way to a dull red. For six weeks during winter we saw nothing of the sun, save a dull, cheerless glow on the mountain tops, but one day, after the "glow-line" had for several weeks been stealthily creeping lower and lower each succeeding noon down the mountain side, the sun was seen shining over a low divide into Bonanza Creek. In honour of this event we left our work and climbed a hill, that we might keep the sun in sight as long as

possible. We took off our fur caps and mittens, and, turning our cheeks and holding our hands towards the sun, we tried to feel the warmth of the rays. But we were disappointed, for at that angle the sun's heat was without the slightest force or effect. I noticed, during the days of comparative darkness, that the disposition of the miners was very different from what it had been when they felt the cheering influence of the sun, and I noticed also that the absence of the sun's heat and light had a marked effect upon their personal appearance. Many of them had pale, colourless, and, apparently, bloodless faces, giving them the look of being frightened to the last degree. And the pupils of the eyes, endeavouring to accommodate themselves to the condition of continual darkness, were always greatly enlarged.

The days grew rapidly longer after February, and from June 1 until the middle of July we could read a newspaper at midnight in our tents. The sun rose a little east of north, described an ellipse, and set one or two points west of north. This process of "setting," however, was rather abbreviated, for the sun merely dipped behind the hills for about three hours, reappearing again on the opposite side. The movements of the sun in summer are similar to those of the moon in winter.

The Northern Lights may be seen in great splendour on nearly every winter night, and their brilliancy is often such that one may travel without difficulty over the trails and about the unlighted streets of Dawson.

The intensity of their peculiar scintillating light, which seems to hang suspended overhead in great wavering folds, is remarkable, and sometimes it seems equal to the light of the winter day. The motion of the sheets or rays of light that travel across the sky is incessant, and their intensity is ever varying. It seems that a peculiar hissing sound is faintly echoed from the wavering masses, but this is so seldom noticeable that some of the miners insist that the occurrence of this beautiful pale light of the skies is not accompanied by sounds of any sort. One often sees crowds of miners who are wending their way from one dance-hall or saloon to another on a cold winter night, standing in the streets and watching the wonderful bright, iridescent light, trying to catch any sound that might issue from the skies. I was always somewhat sceptical about these sounds until one night, as I was travelling up the Klondike River, great sheets of light descended, it appeared, almost to the level of the tree tops. The great swinging, swerving masses looked so close overhead that it seemed as if I could almost reach them with my hand. While this phenomenon was taking place I could distinctly hear the peculiar hissing sound that so often had been described to me: it resembled the grinding noise made on the bottoms of boats as they travel through waters heavily charged with silt. The display of Northern Lights sometimes begins the moment twilight sets in, and the forerunner of the display is usually a great column of light resembling somewhat the rays from an electric search-light, and emanating from the sky line on the horizon.

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These rays become greater in magnitude and intensity as the darkness increases, and then they are seen to be made up of the wavering folds just described. The old miners have a saying that an unusually grand display of the Northern Lights is the forerunner of colder weather, but this is certainly not the case.

Coal has been found at different points along the Yukon River, but up to the present time no systematic effort has been made to mine it or to use it on the river steamers, all of which have wood-burning grates beneath their boilers. George Carmac some years ago discovered a vein of coal on the banks of the Lewis River, near Five-Finger Rapids, but its quality is so poor that it is wholly unfit for heating purposes. Coal-miners who have seen the vein call it brown lignite. On Coal Creek and other tributaries of the Yukon River a good quality of coal has been discovered; and the two Commercial Companies, who are the largest owners of river steamers, have bought the mineral rights in the property, and are now making preparations to develop the vein with a view to using the fuel on their boats, all of which experienced considerable difficulty on the lower river in getting the quantity and quality of fuel desired.

Copper is said to exist among the mountain ranges of the Far North-West, but up to the present time no ledges have been found that are considered worth working. Reports of copper finds are frequently heard from the Tanana and other interior rivers, but the Indians, who are commonly said to be aware of the

existence of copper ledges, know absolutely nothing about them. Copper, however, is just as likely to exist as any of the other minerals, and the country may some day prove as rich in it as it is in gold. Silver has not yet been found in paying quantities at any point along the Yukon River.

The owners of river steamers have had much difficulty in finding suitable winter quarters for their boats, and considerable damage has been done by the ice both during the winter and when the floods carry it out in the spring. In 1897 one of the steamers of the Alaska Commercial Company's fleet was caught in the ice, and, while the men were endeavouring to blow the ice away from the boat with dynamite, a badly placed charge exploded in such a manner as to wreck the steamer. Near Circle City, Fort Selkirk, White Horse Rapids, and several other localities, there are good winter quarters for river boats; but there are long stretches where a steamer, if overtaken by the ice, would find great difficulty in getting into a protected place. This is largely due to the fact that the water is always at a very low stage when it finally freezes up, because the smaller streams invariably become ice-locked several weeks before the main river is frozen, and when the break occurs in the spring the water rises to an unusual height, floods ensue, and the ice masses surround the steamer, threatening it on every side.

The Yukon River, as it tears through the Northern

Country with a speed varying from, perhaps, three to twelve miles an hour, having an average of at least six miles, is continually wearing away great banks of sand and gravel, cutting new channels across the low flats and forming islands. In some places the current grinds so fearfully and continuously against these great banks of sand and loose gravel that the surface of the bank, which is sometimes over a hundred feet high, with an inclination of about forty-five degrees, can be readily seen moving slowly down into the waters that carry it away almost at the moment of contact, and deposit it later on when the current lessens in speed to form sand-bars and flats. While this movement is going on, boulders and rocks become dislodged and are hurled down the incline, carrying great clouds of sand and sliding masses of gravel with them.

At other places along the river the waters have washed against deep banks of alternate layers of sand and gravel, forming perpendicular heights like amphitheatres. The sand has been undermined in places where hard strata exist, forming small caverns through which the waters surge, and higher up the banks may be seen great columns of sand, having almost perpendicular sides, and supported by gravel that appears from the river below to be cemented.

The succession of frosts in winter and thaws in summer disintegrates the softer rocks with great rapidity, and in the spring, when the snows are melting and the surface frosts are disappearing, great masses of boulders come tumbling down the bluffs and steep ravines and plunge into the depths of the river. This

dislodgment of rocks can be seen almost always during the months of April and early May on the bluff across the Yukon River from Dawson, and other places along its course. The softer rocks are often covered with the *débris* of disintegration, and the harder rocks remain as they do in other climates, firm and in place.

The following list of distances from the head of Lake Bennett to Dawson, at the mouth of the Klondike, has been furnished by the engineers in the employ of the Canadian Government, and is practically correct. In computing the total distances from Dawson to the sea-coast, the distance from the coast to the head of Lake Bennett, which is twenty-eight miles by way of Chilcoot Pass, and forty-five miles by way of White Pass, should be added :

Head of Lake Bennett	0
Foot of Lake Bennett	25.7
End of Caribou Crossing	28.3
Foot of Lake Tagish	45.2
Head of Lake Marsh	50.0
Foot of Lake Marsh	69.1
Head of Miles Canyon	94.8
Foot of White Horse Rapids	97.2
Tahkina River	111.0
Head of Lake Le Barge	125.0
Foot of Lake Le Barge	156.1
Mouth of Hootalinqua	187.8
Mouth of Big Salmon	221.0
Mouth of Little Salmon	257.4
Five-Finger Rapids	316.0
Mouth of Pelly River	375.0
Mouth of White River	471.0
Mouth of Stewart River	480.0
Mouth of Klondike River (Dawson)	560.0

There are no snakes or other reptiles in Alaska and the Canadian North-West, and those who fear them may travel anywhere along the streams and over the swamps where snakes, did they exist, would usually be found, without the least apprehension of coming unexpectedly upon them. A species of small frog is met with in some parts of the country, but apart from this there are no specimens of either the snake, the toad, or the frog.

No systematic efforts have ever been made at the different posts along the Yukon River to raise vegetables during the short summer; but miners in early days at Circle City occasionally had small patches of ground planted with turnips, potatoes, lettuce, and cabbage. Sometimes they planted the seeds in the dirt that covered the roofs of their cabins to the depth of a foot or more for warmth, and this earth, being somewhat warmer than the surrounding ground, hastened the bursting of the seeds. At Sixty-Mile Post, above Dawson, potatoes and turnips are grown every summer on a high bank near the river where the soil is exceptionally rich: but no efforts were ever made to grow vegetables at Dawson until a new arrival planted a variety of turnips, lettuce, and radishes in the spring of 1898. These vegetables grew to normal size and quality, and were sold during the summer at fabulous prices—four shillings (or one dollar) for a bunch of six radishes. The difficulty in raising vegetables is due to the fact that there is no suitable soil, rather than to the extreme Northern latitude.

One commonly hears the statement in the North that the Yukon River freezes from the bottom and remains in a more or less solid state during the winter. This fact receives support from the circumstance, noticeable when the ice is forming, that great ice masses, laden with grass and similar vegetation peculiar to the beds of streams, and boulders, appear to come up through the water from the river bed. Those who entertain this theory believe that the ice has formed on the bottom through the agency of the perpetual frost that underlies the entire Northern Country. That the Yukon receives, first, light sluice-ice and then heavy block-ice, which eventually fills it from bank to bank, then jams and finally freezes, leaving a rough surface, there can be no denying. And, at numerous points along the frozen river, air-holes of considerable size frequently occur, showing conclusively that an immense body of water is continually flowing beneath the ice, and that the theory of solid freezing is quite erroneous.

The glaciers along the Alaskan coast and those in the mountainous regions of British Columbia are the only remaining glaciers on the North American continent, and their continued life is due primarily to the Japan current that strikes the coast of the Pacific North-West from the direction of Japan and the coast of Asia towards the Behring Sea.

The effect of this warm current is to heavily charge the air passing over its surface with moisture, which is precipitated in the form of snow upon the mountain summits as the winds pass eastwards towards the

interior. This snow, melting in the almost sunless summers, forms the ice of the glaciers, and in this way gradually supplies practically the same volume of ice at the glacier-heads as is lost at the lower end through the effect of heat or the breaking off of huge cakes that drift seawards as icebergs. The spectral beauty of the glacier-capped summits of the Alaskan coasts is magnificent beyond description, and the glaciers themselves form one of the most interesting studies in nature presented on the North American continent.



TUSK FOUND IMBEDDED IN FROZEN GRAVEL

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